CASE AND COMMENT

LOUIS HOWLAND

H. H. Fout

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CASE AND COMMENT

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Meditations of a Layman on the Christian Year

BY

LOUIS HOWLAND

Author of

DAY UNTO DAY, LIFE OF STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS
THE MIND OF JESUS, Etc.

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To

BISHOP FRANCIS

With the affection and high regard
of the author

These little essays were originally printed in *The Indianapolis News,* appearing on the Saturday of every week. They cover an entire twelvemonth, and are, as will appear, strung rather loosely on the Christian year, of which Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Thanksgiving Day are treated as a part. The assurances that the author has received—which have been both grateful and touching—that some of those who have read them have been helped by them, lead him to hope that old friends will be glad to have this collection of the little preachments in book form. It may be that the volume will serve both to strengthen old friendships, and create new ones.

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I

ADVENT

ADVENT is the season for setting things right against the coming of the great anniversary of the incarnation. The days are, as has often been said, days of preparation. That is true, but the only preparation that is contemplated, or that has any value, consists in amendment of life. St. Paul makes this clear: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day." It is because "the day is at hand," that men are called on to live as though the day were already here. After summing up the commandments of the old dispensation, the apostle continues: "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no

ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." To prepare for the celebration of the feast of divine love people must get something of the spirit of that love in their hearts, and show it forth in their lives.

The mission of John the Baptist was to prepare the people for the dawn of a new day—the burden of his message was "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." On that fact he based his call to repentance and newness of life. When the people asked him what they should do, he said: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." To the tax collectors he said: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you," and to the soldiers: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Very practical it all is, as any preparation that is at all genuine must always be. This is preeminently true of the Advent preparation, and the reason for it is the same—"the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The old question still calls for an answer: "What manner of persons ought ye to be?"

As an incentive to preparation some realization of the importance of the event to be prepared for is essential. Surely to Christians

nothing can be more important than the coming into the world of the God-life. Meditations on that subject will, however, be reserved for the Christmas "sermon." But it may at least be said that long before the dawn of Christmas Day its light—if nothing more than twilight—should be seen on the horizon, gladdening the eyes of men, a foretaste of the glory to be revealed. If men and women could be positively assured that a perfect society would be ushered in next year—such a society as has for ages been longed for—they would, assuming that they had the slightest capacity for thought, at once set about the task of fitting themselves for participation and membership therein, realizing that if they did not do so they would suffer a fate somewhat akin to that which befell the primeval monsters unable to adapt themselves to earth's changes.

However one may interpret the words "the Kingdom of Heaven," they certainly describe, among other things, a perfect social order. The question is here, as in biology, one of adaptation to environment, and the consequences of a failure to make this adaptation are the same in both cases—and may be fatal. That perhaps is what is meant by judgment—that each soul judges itself. If there ever is to be perfection

on this earth, or in any other "peopled sphere," it surely is the part of wisdom to strive and labor for perfection in the individual life, and to co-operate with those who are working along lines leading thereto.

There is a spiritual as well as a material evolution, and there is nothing more fatal to life, whether it be spiritual or physical, than a failure to evolve, painful though the process may be, and often is. So the Christmas thought should influence the pre-Christmas life, and that life should be such as to lead up to the Christmas ideal.

If it be said that life should always be of that quality—which, of course, is true—it ought, nevertheless, to be clear that it will not and can not be, without periods of refreshment and renewal, such as Advent. Things that can, as we say, always be done, almost never are done. Duties that can be performed at any time are mostly left unperformed. It is necessary that these duties be brought to mind in a definite, and, as it were, a dramatic way. It helps greatly to have a fixed and appointed time for doing certain things, for thinking certain thoughts. Doctor Johnson was right when he said that "religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will

glide by degrees out of the mind unless it be invigorated and reimpressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and by the salutary influence of example."

These, then, are peculiarly the days for repentance, amendment of life, spiritual renewal, preparation and meditation on the meaning of life, and on its perfectibility. The call is as real and imperious as that which issued from the lips of the strange and lonely preacher at the fords of the Jordan. Every Advent it comes, and with increasing power and solemnity as one grows older, for then one realizes that "the time is short," and that "the fashion of this world passeth away."

There ought to be, as the days and years fly past, a keener consciousness of the approach of "the Kingdom of Heaven," which may be, and was meant to be realized on this sorrowing and laboring earth. Age ought not to bring resignation or easy-going indifference, but rather a clearer vision of spiritual things, and a deeper and more abiding faith in the power of man in alliance with God to work out his own salvation, and the salvation of the race. The summons to repentance and preparation is, therefore, a summons to victory, to self-conquest.

The world was long preparing for the com-

ing of its Messiah, preparing really, even though often unconsciously. John the Baptist prepared the way for His manifestation as the preacher of salvation, and was himself the fulfillment of an old prophecy. It was said of him shortly before his birth: "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The last of the old prophets said: "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

The note of preparation is everywhere heard; indeed life itself, rightly considered, the true life, is nothing more than preparation. The important thing to know is what men are preparing for, and how they are preparing. There must always be this "earnest looking forward," for men are never, and never have been, content to live wholly in the present. Shakespeare speaks of man as "looking before and after." It has also been said of men that they "pine for what

is not," but they also pine for what may be, what is to be. So, too, they

> —may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.

That certainly is good Christian doctrine—the doctrine of dying to self and sin, and rising to newness of life, the doctrine of life through death. And that is the true life, and it is also the Christmas life, for which the world is "waiting," it is to be hoped not "unaware."

But part of the preparation consists in endowing men with wisdom. For the immediate forerunner of the Messiah was to "turn . . . the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." There is no greater work that needs to be done these days than that. The disobedient, such is the teaching, are both unwise and unjust, while wisdom and justice are the traits of the obedient. It is only the obedient, and so the just and wise, who can understand or enter into relations with Him who "learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Men, as their Master, ought to learn obedience by the things which they suffer, if in no

other way. This great gift or virtue or faculty of obedience should be earnestly coveted and sought by all who would share in that new and divine life that clothed itself with flesh on Christmas Day. No preparation can be adequate that does not include the careful cultivation of obedience, which is a great power. Any man can, if he will, turn at least himself "from the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," and thus do a little something "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Nor can there be a greater mission. Unfortunately, men seem more concerned to make others obey than to obey themselves. And it is quite as unfortunate that there should be others who look on obedience as almost a sin, a sort of breaking of the will. The crime wave, of which we hear so much, and which is such a source of humiliation, will not be broken until men learn to obey; that is, learn to be in some degree both wise and just. In no other way can they be made or make themselves fit for "the Kingdom of Heaven," which is always "at hand." Such was the preaching of the great forerunner, such the preaching and living of the Messiah himself.

Part of the preparation, it has been said, consists in endowing men with wisdom and justice.

Herein men must largely minister unto themselves, for wisdom and justice can not be forced on them, can not, perhaps, even be given to them. The wise man will prepare for what is coming whether it be bad, or, as in this case, the supreme good. If he is wise, he will also be just. Wisdom and justice are indeed close of kin. Without these, and without obedience, society would fall to pieces. By them "the Kingdom of Heaven" is inspired and controlled, and with them it is permeated.

Advent, finally, speaks of vigilance. "Watch ye therefore:" so it is written, "for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." Again it is written: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching. . . . Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Preparation, therefore, involves vigilance, and vigilance insures readiness, and "readiness is all." Advent brings to mind in a most impressive way many great, and indeed vital, features of the Christian life, features which it must have if it is to be truly Christian. It also points to an event that changed the whole course of human history, and which, we dare not refuse to believe, will change it more and more as men increasingly grasp the significance of that event, and submit themselves more and more to its influence and teaching. It is to-day the inspiration of those who are laboring and praying for peace and good will among men.

II

BIBLE SUNDAY

THE second Sunday in Advent is Bible Sunday and in connection with it is set forth St. Paul's teaching in regard to the Bible. Writing to the Romans, he said: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The conclusion of the passage is as follows: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." "Learning" is to be derived from the Scriptures, but, apparently only, certainly chiefly, such learning as flowers in hope. What is to be sought is the knowledge of God as a spirit, related to and dealing with the spirit of man, or with man as a spirit. Of this knowledge the Bible is full.

The apostle whose words have been quoted would not have understood much of what is to-

day being said about the Bible, and the nature of its revelation. To many of the phases of the subject that are now so generally discussed he would have been indifferent, except for his surprise. Like Nicodemus, he probably would have asked: "How can these things be?" He thought of the Bible, not as a teacher of science or history, but as a revelation of Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ himself did when, in speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures, He said: "They are they which testify of me." That, at any rate, is their supreme service and it would be well if this were more widely recognized, if men would govern their living and thinking by this divinely attested truth.

Christ again said: "It is the spirit that quickeneth," which words are thus interpreted by Him: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." What is to be looked for is the revelation that God makes of Himself, and that must needs be spiritual. And that revelation is, as the apostle says, the basis of comfort, patience and hope, and the justification of them.

But if there is to be this hopeful spirit, this general attitude of hopefulness, there must also be something for which men may hope, some-

thing which is itself derived from such knowledge of the "things written aforetime" as the apostle speaks of and commends. We are to read and study the Scriptures in order that "we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life" as well as hope, for life without hope would be intolerable. "The blessed hope of everlasting life"—it is this that is to be sought and coveted—and, when gained, to be cherished—this that we are to "embrace, and ever hold fast."

The ability to do this, it seems, is derived from a knowledge of the Bible as a source of inspiration and spiritual power, as the book of life, the leaves of which are "for the healing of the nations." The man who gets this apostolic view of the matter can never be disturbed—though he may be saddened—by the wrangling over inspiration, the method of creation, or other questions, which, no matter how decided, have no bearing on the function of Scripture as the inspirer and strengthener of hope—"hope of everlasting life."

All lovers of the Bible understand this—though they are much given to forgetting it when they begin to argue—as is proved by the fact that all have their favorite passages which

are invariably those of the highest spiritual value. No dying man ever asked that the list of Israel's kings, the catalogue of Joshua's wars, or the Levitical code be read to him. On the contrary he finds hope, life, patience and comfort in the Twenty-third Psalm, in Christ's words "in my Father's house are many mansions," and in St. Paul's great argument for immortality. In these and such as they is "the spirit that quickeneth."

There are two other fruits of this divine knowledge, according to the apostle—patience and comfort. God Himself is spoken of as "the God of patience and consolation," and it is through "patience and comfort" that men are to have hope, and, greatest of all, "the blessed hope of everlasting life." This is the clear teaching of Bible Sunday, and it is a teaching that men of our day greatly need to take to heart. There are times when it is well, and even necessary, for men to look within that they may learn their own weaknesses and needs. Those who get that vision will use the Bible as it was meant to be used—that is, for the strengthening and upbuilding of their spiritual life, which is "the everlasting life," everlasting even now.

Here, then, is a "learning" of incalculable

value, a learning that develops patience, brings comfort and consolation, fills men with hope and purifies and cleanses their hearts and makes for "fulness of life." Such is the education that may be derived from the "things written aforetime," and apparently can be derived from no other source. It is, therefore, no question of "saving the Bible," but rather of understanding it, and the lofty purpose it was designed to serve, and of bringing its spiritual teaching to bear on the individual life, and on the life of the world. They are the greatest lovers of the Bible who devote their efforts and energies most earnestly toward these ends.

While the Bible is known as the word of God, the most authentic Word, certainly for Christians, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Of this Word we read: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," of that very "God of patience and consolation." All that was "written aforetime" was summed up and manifested in Him.

It is, of course, necessary to think of the new and divine life as a life of power, for there can be no greater power than "the power to become

the sons of God." It seems the height of presumption for a man to think of such a thing even as a remote possibility. Yet it may be a present actuality. There are here two powers—the power to become sons of God, and the power that results from such a becoming as shown by those who prove themselves worthy of divine sonship. And there have been in the long course of human history many such, to the glory of the human race. Men may be, and indeed are, as Tennyson sang, "but broken lights of Thee," but they have reflected the divine image just to the extent that they have used the proffered "power to become the sons of God." With the power to enter into this divine relation of sonship must go the power—which also must be used—to live a life worthy of so high a calling.

There has been much speculation as to the nature of life, as there have been many attempts to define it. But there can hardly be any quarrel with the statement that life, whatever else it is or is not, is living, and that is as true of the "everlasting life" as of any other. The good life is that which is lived finely and on a high plane. It is the life of power because it is lived in such a way as to make it a power in the world and among men—a power for good.

There is no good man who does not covet moral influence, no good man, indeed, who does not possess it, unbeknown perhaps to himself. Those who are truly the sons of God must of necessity shed abroad in the world something of the divine light, and manifest in word and deed something of the divine nature in which they share as members of the divine family. In such, under God, rest the highest hopes of humanity. The great problem is one of increasing their number.

So instead of speculating about life and its nature, it seems advisable, at least occasionally, to devote ourselves to the far humbler task of thinking about living—of the conduct of life, and its quality as shown in action. To live hopefully, to be patient, to seek consolation—and to bestow it on others—in "whatsoever things were written aforetime," to "embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life," and to strive to "become the sons of God"—this comes pretty near to measuring up to the responsibility of man.

Living may be thought of in another way—that is, as a progress or movement toward perfection, an evolution from bad to good, from better to best. Nor can there be any more in-

spiring or challenging way in which to think of it. However perfection may come, through suffering or in some other way, it is the goal of all noble human effort. St. John writes: "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Then follows this: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." So practical is the conclusion of the whole matter.

What men need to be concerned about is not any theory of the Bible, or of religion, but their way of living—"every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." That is what it all comes to, and the sooner Christians realize this the better it will be for them, and for the world and the church. There is always a chance for the prodigal, but perhaps it is better not to trade on that chance, better not to be a prodigal. To "embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life" must involve a realization of what may be the "everlasting" consequence of debasing such a life.

Finally there is the thought of peace and concord. After saying that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our

learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope," St. Paul continues thus: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded toward one another according to Christ Jesus." That is a great prayer, for it is a prayer for the satisfaction of a real human need—the need for concord among those who are called, and have "power to become the sons of God." If there is not harmony in the divine family, harmony between its members, and between them and its head, one hardly knows where to look for it. The world is moving in the direction of peace as opposed to physical war, and we should thank God that it is so. But there is a deeper peace, a peace which "man did not make and can not mar," peace in the human soul through its relation with the God of peace. So true Christians must be "like-minded toward one another according to Christ Jesus"—a difficult task, but one to the performance of which they are called.

Bible Sunday thus seems to have many lessons, and they all bear on character, on the practical, every-day conduct of life. Perhaps there never was a greater need than now to impress those lessons deeply on the consciousness and conscience of mankind. It is written: "If we

live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." It is written again: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The question for Christians is one of entering into their heritage, of being ever loyal to their high calling, and to the divine family of which they are members. Great is their responsibility, for others as well as for themselves.

III

PREPARATION

I HAVE said something of preparation, and the need for it, based on the words "prepare ye the way of the Lord." It may be well to give some thought to the result of that preparation, to what it was designed to accomplish. The chief burden of the task—though not all of it—falls on the Christian ministry, for ministers are messengers, heralds who go before, and "ministers and stewards" of the divine mysteries. The prayer is that they, as John the Baptist, "may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way." This is a very exalted conception of the ministry, but it is also the scriptural conception. If the work of preparation is well done the result will be "an acceptable people" in the sight of God, and the existence of such a people will be proof conclusive that there has been a real and effective preparation, and there can be no other proof. If there are no such people there will have been no preparation.

Clearly the responsibility of the ministry is enormous. It is called to go before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elias . . . to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Nothing less than that is its mission, though there are men in the ministry—perhaps many of them—who do not seem to understand and realize it. It is not a matter of magnifying self, or even the office, but rather the mission, which is so great that it can not be magnified. Both clergy and laity would gain much if they could hear, and would heed, the Advent call. The clergy are part of that people who are to be made "acceptable," and this they can be only as they do, or strive to do, the great work that is laid on them. The task is difficult, the responsibility heavy, but the honor is almost beyond computation. "An acceptable people" in the sight of God—that is what is to be striven for.

But all men are in a sense ministers, for there is a "royal priesthood," a priesthood of the laity, which shares in both the responsibility and the honor. If the great work is to be done all must participate in it. There had been much preparation unconsciously carried on, as by the builders of the Roman roads, the authors and upholders of the Roman peace, and those who spread the

Greek and Latin languages throughout the civilized world. Here was a very real preparation for the labors of the first Christian missionaries. And work of this sort is still being carried on by scientists, merchants and traders.

But it is of conscious—and spiritual—preparation that we are now thinking. That it is terribly needed must be apparent to any one who has the slightest conception of human nature, of its weakness and sinfulness. Yet men mostly think of creating conditions or establishing institutions, which, though they may contribute to man's ease, comfort and power, may also leave man morally and spiritually much as they found him. People having all these may still fail to be "acceptable" to God. Reform, therefore, must begin within—must be less reform than regeneration.

Those do well who create more favorable conditions, but the great task is to re-create human nature. Nothing is more difficult—or necessary. In this matter every man can minister to himself, if he will but do so. There is no more important business in which he can engage. This was clearly the thought of the great Forerunner, as it should be that of His successors, of all who take a serious view of life, and understand something

of its meaning. Yet we seem much disposed to turn it over to the legislature which, in the very nature of things, can exert not the slightest influence on the inner and spiritual nature of man. The soul lives wholly beyond its jurisdiction.

It is a problem of developing and nourishing the God-life in the soul of man. Those will be most "acceptable" in whom it pulses most strongly. The prayer of Christ for His disciples to the end of time was this: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world can not receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," and here is the life of God in the soul of man.

This is the life that was given to men, the life into which they may enter and which they may share. To participation in it they are clearly called. This is what the apostle had in mind when he wrote that men "might be partakers of the divine nature," as of course they may. It is indeed a matter of family relationship, recognized, gladly acknowledged, and lived up to. It will be seen therefore, that the work of preparation is exceedingly difficult, and that the

process may be slow and prolonged. It has taken countless ages to work the beast out of man, and the task has not yet been completed. It should not be thought strange if it takes countless other ages to work God into him. It is to that consummation that preparation must be directed, that preparation, the great fruit of which is a "people acceptable" to God.

Men are called, not to fight a battle, but to enlist in and carry on a campaign. To its successful issue every one can contribute something, though it may be little. There can at least be faithfulness, and an earnest effort to prepare at least one's self for the reception of the ever-broadening revelation of divine truth, however and by whatever unexpected ways it may come. The call is a challenge to the best that is in man, a challenge that is full of inspiration. What God expects, that surely man ought to be proud and glad to strive to be.

The future toward which the world is looking is Christmas. It is to that future that the immediate work of preparation is directed. Christmas can mean little to the man who is hard, cruel, selfish, cynical, proud, and still less to those who hypocritically pretend, and may have cheated themselves into believing that they are

untainted by the vices for which the adjectives stand, nor can it be possible for them to get much out of the gracious season. In order worthily to keep the great feast they must have in them something of the life of which the day speaks, and to which it bears witness.

Again it is apparent that preparation is necessary, and preparation of a very serious and thorough sort. But it is a fortunate circumstance that the future, and the thought of it, reach back into the present, and cooperate in the great work of preparation. The Christmas spirit, for instance, touches the heart and cleanses and uplifts the soul—lifts it out of and above itself, and brings it closer to the life of Christmas. That, it has been said, is a fortunate circumstance. The event to be prepared for is, it seems, a part of the preparation, and a powerful agent in it. Looking forward to Christmas one must be a better man, and thus more "acceptable" to God, and better prepared to keep the great festival in the beautiful spirit of which it is the expression.

So it is that the future lives in the present, and molds it into some likeness to the divine event which is looked and waited for. Men would profit greatly from the cultivation of the

power to use the future in this way. It would thus bring a blessing to them before it dawns as well as when it comes. It is so of Christmas, as of everything that may happen in the providence of God.

This is a very wise age, and there are many who belong to the class of people to whom the apostle addressed the warning: "Be not wise in your own conceits." Many there are who look on sophistication as a virtue, and to whom unsophistication is weak and foolish. Yet it is to unsophistication, or childlikeness, that Christians are called, both by word and example. It is a great virtue, and one that it is, and never more so than now, most difficult to acquire. Men are intellectually proud of themselves and intellectually scornful of others, and this is particularly true of the uplifters, of whom there are many, who seem to feel that it is by sarcasm we are saved. A little self-study would help greatly toward the elimination of the great vice of sophistication, and there could be no better preparation for Christmas, which is the day of innocence and childlikeness.

"Be not wise in your own conceits"—the advice is good and the warning is needed. Men are engaged in reforming the world who never

think of reforming themselves—do not imagine that there is any need for them to do so. To them their "conceits" are the sum of all wisdom—yet they may be "foolishness with God," and very probably are. So it was that the apostle characterized "the wisdom of this world." That he was right is proved by much that has happened in human history. "The wisdom of this world" is at least less wise than it often seems to be, and is always believed to be by those who proudly boast that they are the possessors of it.

There is another wisdom—that which is held by the world to be foolishness, but which is the only true and abiding wisdom. It is a question of the attitude of the soul toward life and its Author, and toward the souls of other men. And none can be more important.

So it seems that there is much to be done in the way of preparation, not only for Christmas, but for the unknown future that lies before us, and for the life that we live from day to day. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord"—such is the old trumpet call, and it still rings out over "the tumult of this world's wild, restless sea." It is a summons to high endeavor, to cleanness of life, to a partaking in the divine nature, to nobility of character—to Godlikeness, in short. It is a call

to honesty and sincerity, to love of truth, and to a willingness to serve it, and, if need be, to suffer for it. It is, too, a call to self-examination, and to a banishing of "whatever is amiss in the temper and disposition of our souls."

Men think of Christianity as an easy religion, and so it is as exhibited in the lives of many of those who profess it. But there is nothing easy in it as it was preached and lived by its Author. It is a great, and maybe a fatal, mistake to think of it as making few and easy demands on men, for the contrary is true. Nothing, for instance, is harder than this very business of preparation if it is honestly and bravely carried on. For that involves sacrifices, often of the most serious and painful sort. To prepare for the dawn of perfection on human life means that there must be an effort to attain perfection by the one who prepares, or would prepare.

One can not slouch through life and still be a Christian, for Christianity is the religion of "the soul well-knit" that "with all his battles won," "mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life." It is militant against evil, against the worst evil of all, that which dwells in the hearts and souls of men, corrupting the nature, and marring the likeness of the life to that divine image in which it was created.

IV

CHRISTMAS

THE Sunday immediately preceding Christmas, the last of the Sundays of preparation, speaks of joy—"rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." Men were bidden to rejoice and to let their "moderation be known"—why? Because, such is the answer, "the Lord is at hand." It is this coming that is year after year kept in mind on Christmas Day—the coming of God into human life. It is a great and sobering thought, but it is also one that should stir rejoicing in the hearts and souls of men. However greatly people may differ in their theological views—and into such matters it is not proposed to go—it is generally agreed that Christmas commemorates a very important event, one that has had a greater influence on the world's life, and on the course of history, than any other. That is the reason why the day "means intensely, and means good." And it is

because it does so mean that the day is one of sacred joy.

It is well—but not enough—that Christmas should be "merry." It should also be a day of thankfulness, thankfulness for the transcendent gift of which it reminds the world that so sorely needed it, and still needs it. Christmas is the great festival of love, divine and perfect love, of which there is now, as there always has been, a sad lack on this planet, and that has been the trouble with it. Many Christmases have come and gone, and yet the Christmas spirit is but feebly exhibited in the lives of those who ought to be the best expressions of it. One would not be pessimistic during this hallowed season, and yet it must be said that selfishness does even yet seem to be almost the ruling principle in human life.

"Love not pleasure," said Carlyle, "love God." To love pleasure for its own sake is to love self; to love truth, honor, purity—and one's fellowmen—is to love God. The Carlyle doctrine should be taken to heart, and lived.

The shepherds rejoiced because they were told that a Saviour had been born—"unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "The shepherds said

one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." A Saviour was what the world then needed, and needs now. Men then were conscious of this need, more so than they seem to be to-day. There were many ideas of what salvation meant, but after nineteen Christian centuries people ought to be able to see, in the light of all the Christmases that have gladdened the human spirit, that salvation can be effected only through a renewal of life, through a process of re-creation.

The penetration of the human by the divine life, the transforming of the human life into the divine—this is salvation. It is not an act, but a process, and one that may be long and painful. The Saviour of Christmas Day is, perhaps, first of all, a renewer and regenerator, and it is in this capacity, as well as in the capacity of Victor-Victim, that He saves. The newer and nobler life ought to seem very near, and very precious on the birthday of Jesus Christ. For it is His life, the life to which He calls men, and which He imparts to them.

Much has been written and spoken of the "state of salvation," yet surely it is nothing more

or less than living in that new life, the life which Christ said that He Himself was, and is. No other salvation than this is worth a moment's thought. "As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Salvation, then, consists in sharing the divine life, abiding in it, and in deriving therefrom fruit-bearing power.

In all this there is abundant reason for rejoicing, and perhaps even more reason in the necessary inference that man has the capacity for salvation, for entering into that life which is itself salvation. Everything depends on the willingness of man to use the great powers that are his, and on his recognition of the fact that the divine life is his, if he will but appropriate it, and be obedient to its laws.

Christmas, therefore, speaks, not only of the divine pity for man, but of the divine confidence in him. There would have been no Saviour had not man both needed to be saved and been worth saving. What we see is the exaltation of humanity through intimate association and contact with divinity. The master thought is that these are allies in the struggle against sin and evil. It is possible to have a "good time" on Christmas without giving a thought to the deep

significance of the day, but it is not possible, apart from some appreciation of that significance, to get any spiritual benefit or blessing from it. So it will be well for people to ask themselves the old question: "What mean ye by this feast?"

The answer to the question ought not to be hard nor doubtful to those reared in a Christian land. There is time enough before the dawn of the great day for meditation on the subject. Nor need there be any fear of dulling the enjoyment of the day, or of converting it into a day of gloom and somberness. Rather the feast will be more joyous because of the realization that "the Lord is at hand." It is a great pity to allow the holy day to be entirely submerged in the holiday, as so many do, to their very great loss. It may result in a loss of spiritual power, which is sure to grow weak just in proportion as it is not used. And that is a very serious possibility. The less man grows to be like God, just that much less is he man.

Christmas also proclaims good will among men—good will of one to another. And out of that good will peace must of necessity be born. One can hardly think of the eternal love without longing for it to fill one's soul. If it does, it

must reveal itself in kindly deeds and words, in gentleness toward others, in service to them, and in sacrifice in their behalf.

In Mr. Hutchinson's book, *One Increasing Purpose,* the hero, feeling that he was saved from death in the great war because there was a purpose which he was bound to serve, devotes his life to finding out what that purpose is, and yet in everything that he does and says he is, without knowing it, carrying out that purpose. He gives up the army, refuses to engage in any money-making enterprise, and gradually begins to feel that, to quote from the book, "God is after him." Others come more and more to rely on him, and see in him a support and stay. The revelation broadens and becomes clearer and clearer, but the point of it all is that the revelation comes to him through his experience in fulfilling, perhaps without knowing it, the purpose which he sought to discover.

Surely the purpose that should dominate the life of those who would keep Christmas worthily must be to live so as to make human relationships more kindly, and to shed abroad, as far as weak human nature may, the divine love, and thus to bring men closer together, and closer to God. Yet many to-day are living by the gospel of

suspicion, bitterness and hate, and still they call themselves Christians, and are convinced that they are followers of Him in whose soul there was no hate, but only love, love even for His enemies. To work for peace, to promote love and good will, and to extirpate hate—such surely should be the purpose of all lives touched even to the slightest extent by the Christmas spirit.

As we grow older, and realize more keenly that each Christmas may be our last, the day comes to have a sweeter and tenderer meaning. We think of Christmases past, and all their sacred associations, of the home and family, of old customs in connection with Christmas, of those who are gone, and with reverent gratitude of those still left to us. The day is a family day, a children's day, a day presided over by love and trust, in those tenderer and more intimate relationships from which the world, for one day in the year at least, seems very far away. Christmas Day is a good day on which to repair those homes that have broken down, or broken up, and to strengthen the home spirit. It is generally agreed that there is no more lonely being on earth than a homeless man or woman on Christmas Day. It may be possible for some of those

blessed with homes to do something to minister to the homeless.

So Christmas has its personal, as well as its social and religious aspect. Indeed its personal may be its most deeply religious aspect. For the relation between God and man is personal, and the Saviour proclaimed to the shepherds saves persons, and not masses. And the home relation is a relation between persons—and, let it not be forgotten, between persons and things. The home should be a temple, dedicated to love, and warmed and lit by it. When it is well with the home it will be well with the nation—and not otherwise.

So the world is once more to celebrate the great home day, the family day, and the day of little children, the day of sacred memories. It ought to be the sum of all Christmases past, and the pledge of others yet to come. Past and future should merge in a blessed present, and over all should hover the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness.

The appeal to the feelings in connection with Christmas is not only justifiable, but unavoidable, though there are of course those who deprecate sentiment; just why is not clear. Love, kindliness, thankfulness and gratitude are all

sentiments or feelings, and men would be poor without them. The Christmas story is beautiful—beautiful even as poetry, of which most of the great elements are present. Painters have illustrated it, poets have chanted it, and some men and women have made their lives poetically beautiful by living it. Carlyle was again right when he said, in substance, higher has human thought not gone.

So men must "feel" Christmas, and this ought not to be difficult. For its appeal is both to the sense of beauty and the affections. It is the birthday of one who longed and yearned for the love of men, and who gave to men His love in fullest measure. It is right to give gifts, and to be merry as the family was over the return of the prodigal boy. But back of it all should be some realization of what the festival means for the world and for human souls—and for the homes of this land which we all love. We do well to wish one another a merry Christmas, but surely it will not be amiss to wish our friends also a deeply Christian Christmas, and it will also be well for all to remember that they are celebrating the birth into the world of infinite purity and love.

If it is not a sacred day, it is surely not a true

Christmas. The effect of the day itself, as of the preparation for it, ought to be to make us "an acceptable people" in the divine sight, a people worthy of the great love so royally bestowed. So we should keep the feast with thankful hearts, and in a spirit of wondering humility—so we must keep it if it is to be the blessing which it is capable of being.

V

ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

In an old prayer men ask that they may be made "sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of human life," the end of which can not be far off even for the youth with threescore years ahead of him. That it is uncertain as well as short daily experience proves. Such thoughts as these, which need not and ought not to be depressing, much less terrifying, naturally suggest themselves at the end of the year. Man realizes as he does not at other times that he is standing between the past and the future, standing on a very narrow isthmus, and he can hardly help, if he is at all serious-minded, meditating on what is gone and also on what is to come. Absorption in the present is much less complete than at other times, and to many it seems—as it is—insignificant as compared with the ages that have gone and those that are yet to come. So we are freed, for the time, from thraldom to

the passing moment so soon to be swallowed up in the vast gulf that lies behind us.

The old year typifies life, and both are alike transitory. It was the Psalmist who said: "I see that all things come to an end," and then he added: "But thy commandment is exceeding broad."* Endings of course are solemn things, and men naturally shrink from a contemplation of them, in which they are not wise. The truly wise man is he who is "sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of human life," for he can be insensible to them only as he shuts his eyes to the facts, and that is always a foolish thing to do.

The important thing is, not that the year or that one's life should come to an end, but that both should have been used nobly. It is the belief or fear that they may not have been that clothes with solemnity the thought of the passing of both. And it should be so. Unhappy is the man with whom it is otherwise. What one thinks of is, not so much the time that is gone, as the way in which it has been employed. It would be wonderful if there were nothing with which a man could reproach himself.

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*Quotations from the Psalms are taken from the Psalter in *The Book of Common Prayer;* all other quotations are from the King James version of the Bible.

But endings in themselves have in them something of sadness. Certainly there is nothing promotive of joy in the thought that one has done something, or gazed on a certain scene for the last time. Quoting the Psalmist again: "The days of man are but as grass: for he flourisheth as a flower of the field. For as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." "The place thereof shall know it no more"—it is so with man. There is nothing morbid in such reflections, for they are true, and truth can not be morbid. But there is much of melancholy in them. Yet it is to be noted that the Psalmist's conclusions, inspired as they were by faith, are cheerful. "I see that all things come to an end," he said, and then fell back on the commandment of Almighty God, which, as he felt, was "exceeding broad." While it was true that "the place thereof shall know it no more," it was, and is, also true that "the merciful goodness of the Lord endureth forever and ever upon them that fear Him; and His righteousness upon children's children; even upon such as keep His covenant, and think upon his commandments to do them." So permanence is associated with transitoriness. In the life of man, and in his experience those things are per-

manent which deserve to be permanent. This is made clear in the wonderful teaching of Jesus Christ, who said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away"—nor have they passed. But one must be saddened at the passing away of things, which, though having in them nothing of immortality, are yet innocent, and perhaps lovely, and certainly are cherished. So it is that sunset and the twilight hour are always tinged with a melancholy which, though beautiful, is none the less melancholy. Beauty and sadness are by no means strangers to each other, though many can see no relation between them.

It is to be borne in mind, too, that even the words "the last time" may have some cheer in them—it all depends on what they are applied to. One may go home at night, and enter the well-known door for the last time, but one may also suffer pain or be called on to bear disappointment and sorrow for the last time. If what we believe to be good things are impermanent, what we know to be evil things are impermanent too. "Though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years: yet is their strength then but labor and sorrow; so soon passeth it away; and we are gone." So the "labor and sorrow" come

to an end with this mortal life, and to be rid of them is a great joy.

It is so with the old year—there is much in it that we would forget if we could, and it surely brought the usual burden of unhappiness and grief—perhaps of shame. Looking back on it men must feel that they could have done better with it, made much greater progress in the realization of the ideal in life. So it is proper and most helpful, along with the thought of failure, and sorrow over it, to welcome with all the enthusiasm that can be commanded the new chance that is offered, and resolve to improve it to the uttermost. While the past may warn and rebuke, as it should, the future invites and challenges.

A famous general marching with his troops on to what seemed to be a lost field, when asked what was to be done, said: "The battle is lost, but there is time enough to win another one," and so Marengo was won, though the reinforcing general, Desaix, was killed at the head of his charging men. Hence, though there always is a "last time," there is also ever the opportunity to retrieve disaster. It is within the power of every man to make the new year better than the old, but only as we recognize past mistakes and

sins and keep clear of them in that untrodden future that opens before us.

But, after all, endings are only another name for beginnings—the ending of one task means the beginning of another. The end of one season marks the opening of another, as the old year merges into the new. But beginnings themselves, though they should always be entered on with a high heart and a stout courage, have about them a certain solemnity, which is as it should be. For here the thought of responsibility enters, and no thoughtful man can escape from it or put it from him. While men are responsible for the past, they are not responsible in the sense that they can change, or make it over. Their responsibility for the future is of a different kind, for of the future they can make pretty much what they please.

It is no longer a question of what one has done, but of what one is going to do and be. Looked at in this way even opportunity is a burden as well as a blessing, and yet who would be without it? Men are always asking for fuller opportunity, for another chance, and they are, or profess to be, grateful, when these are accorded them, and that is the way they should feel. But their gratitude should show itself in

action, action in the line of a firm resolve to make the most of the chance which, in the providence of God, comes to them.

It is worse to throw a chance away than never to have had a chance, worse and more fatal to character. There is always the possibility of progress, a possibility that has many times been realized to the full, else civilization would long since have perished. The motto for the new year may well be that recorded in the book of Exodus: "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." To begin right is much, but it is still better, having begun well, never to quit. The appeal is to courage and to the sense of honor.

Yet beginnings are, after all, cheerful things. and for many reasons. Men, as a rule, accept responsibilities lightly—perhaps too lightly—and are disposed to enter on a new task or into a new life with a fine confidence, without thinking much of past failures. "The king is dead, long live the king"—such is their feeling. But more than that there is a legitimate inspiration in the thought that the door is not shut, and in the consciousness that victory is always possible. The death of the old year is but the birth of the new, and so life, with its joys and sorrows, its triumphs and defeats, goes on, and mounts

slowly and painfully, yet steadily, to a higher plane.

The mercies of God, we are assured, are new every morning, and we are told further that though "heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning." So we naturally think of beginnings in association with endings, may indeed rightly think of them as two faces of the same fact. All will remember St. Paul's words: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

What the apostle did, all may do if they will. There is no other attitude possible to a Christian, or indeed to any man who knows at all what life is, and is capable of becoming. We are to march out of the past into a more glorious future, and never long, as the children of Israel did—and this was their most sordid and cowardly sin—for the old fleshpots. "Go forward" is still the divine command, and it is most heartening and inspiring. Those men are in evil case who are no longer able to hear, and have no capacity to heed, and obey it. If there are any such men they greatly need to look to themselves.

The great ending, of course, is the ending of this mortal life, and it is the one from which we are most disposed to shrink, often with a most un-Christian terror. Yet what is that but another beginning, the greatest and most wonderful beginning of all? The two lives merge into one, as the old and new year merge into each other, and make up the great current of time. We say that he who dies has "entered into life," whereas he has never left it. The passage is from one stage of experience to another, and ends only that it may begin. All depends on the point of view from which we regard death. In one sense it is an end, but it is not a full end. In another sense it is, as has been said, a beginning.

We have no right to attempt to bound and limit the future, for of it eternity is a component part. Men argue on this subject from physical analogies, which are always deceptive, and from which no sure conclusions can be drawn as applicable to the spiritual world. For we are now in the realm of faith, and the only question is whether or nor it is a reasonable faith. St. Paul pressed "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—that is, he refused to believe that life ended with the grave. To him death was an ending of what he desired

to have ended, but the beginning of a glorious and transfigured life crowned with perfection.

One may at least try to think of death in this way, especially when called on to yield one's own earthly life, or to part from another. There is nothing in the religious life of this age that is in greater need of strengthening than the belief in immortality. From that no one would shrink, however much he might shrink from death as an end. The great new year, to which our little new years point, is the new year of the eternal life—and there can be nothing grander.

VI

EPIPHANY

The feast of the Epiphany is the day kept in commemoration of the visit of the three wise men, or Magi, to Him whom they believed to be King of the Jews. It speaks of the penetrating, and also of the drawing power of truth, which often has made, and is even now making its way in the face of all obstacles, and even into hearts and minds that seem to be tightly closed against it. If it were not so the human situation would be far worse than it is. But the fact that truth has this wonderful power does not absolve men from the duty of being hospitable to it, the duty of welcoming it with joy no matter whence it comes, or how it reaches them.

According to the gospel story, the Magi were looking for and expecting and searching for the truth, and thus were prepared to recognize and accept it as the ruling influence in their lives. There was, in other words, a correspondence

between their minds and the truth, and it was through the cooperation of these that the blessing came to them. The star of Bethlehem is a symbol or emblem of that light which truth sheds on the path of those who seek it, a light that becomes brighter and brighter till the full revelation, however it is won, bursts on the vision. As the twilight of the dawn precedes the dawn, heralds, and is a part of it, so it is with the visit of truth to the human soul. Men are led to the truth by the very light which it sends before.

The Epiphany is, therefore, a beautiful parable, though much more, but still a parable which proclaims a great principle, and the method of its working in the lives of men. It teaches that those who humbly and honestly seek the truth are led to the truth by the very truth which is sought, as many men have discovered, always to their surprise, and always with joy. So we read of the wise men that "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

The feast is also the feast of light. It is a strange and curious fact that men very often seem disposed to shut their eyes to the light, and, when they can not exclude it, actually sin against it. There is something terrible, as well as benign, about the light. It is revelatory, and there is

much in the life of man which he would not have revealed, even to himself. It is then a question of living so that the light will be rejoiced in, rather than dreaded. That is a practical consideration and one that bears directly on human thought and action. Light is the only thing known to man that can not be polluted. On the contrary, it is purity itself, and is endowed with a marvelous cleansing and healing power, a power which operates in the spiritual as well as the material world. It may be dimmed and obscured, may be excluded—but it continues to shine.

It was to the blessed sunlight that Browning looked for human salvation in his poem entitled *Apparent Failure:*

> It's wiser being good than bad;
> It's safer being meek than fierce;
> It's fitter being sane than mad.
> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
> That after Last, returns the First,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched;
> That what began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

Men pray that their minds may be "enlightened more and more" with the divine truth, which is light, and so it is light which they pre-

sumably want. Yet the Psalmist described many people, not only of his day, but of ours, when he said: "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness," and as a result he continued: "All the foundations of the earth are out of course."

But light men must have, and love, if they are to realize their true destiny. A curse was pronounced on those who confused light and darkness, as well as on those who loved darkness rather than light.

Intimately associated with truth and light is life, the life of individuals and of societies. Bacon's words are, or ought to be familiar: "No pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth (a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene), and to see the errors and wanderings and mists and tempests in the vale below; so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling or pride. Certainly, it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth." Thus the light and truth of which the great Englishman wrote flower into a life, a life that is "heaven upon earth," a life of love and truth and trust. To have the "mind

move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth"—nothing more than this could be asked, required or desired.

One of the Epiphany prayers is that God's people "may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same." There can be no such knowledge unless there is light, which is only another name for perfect and absolute—and divine—truth. Thus this great spiritual truth is not reduced to the basis of "hard and inadequate dogma," but is rather converted into a great life principle. The application was clearly made by St. Paul who said: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Again he said, "that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God." Those, in other words, who have light and truth are responsible for the use they make of them, and are bound to manifest them in their lives. To those who were said by Christ to be "the light of the world," he also said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." "Good works," were to be the reflection of the light.

Now Jesus Christ said of Himself that He was light, truth and life. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," He said, and again: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is primarily a question of loyalty—"he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." Here then is leadership, just that leadership which the world professes to desire, that leadership which the Magi followed. It is an exalted leadership, yet who would have a leader who merely kept abreast of the mass? Loyalty glows most brightly when it summons men to a difficult task or a dangerous service, and it is so here. Browning writes of:

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky.

But he goes on to say of these that they:

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

All can derive encouragement from the following prophetic utterance:

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,
When eternity affirms the conceptions of an hour.

So it is with this leadership—it is not for an hour, but for eternity. The march is long, and the way is not easy, but the end is victory, the noblest of all victories—that over self, which is also the most difficult one to win. The life incarnated in and manifested by the Leader is the life eternal: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." Here are truth, light and life, and the fulfillment of all three.

Such is the revelation of the Epiphany, that broader revelation that first reached the Gentile world, and to which the Gentile world, as represented by the Magi, responded. Why is it not possible for Christians of all names to center their thought on these majestic themes to the exclusion of much that now seems to disturb them, and yet has no relation whatever to the daily life of man? Men are not called to hold certain

"views," but they are called to walk in the light, to live the truth, and to follow a Leader—and one who knows the way. Of the Magi we read: "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshiped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

That is, they adored, sacrificed, and pledged their fealty. And this is Christianity, and nothing else is. Surely one may hope for something like peace in the Christian world and for an end of that violent talk and recrimination which have been so disheartening, and even shocking. We may well pray that "all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." If the faith were held by all "in righteousness of life" there would be no quarreling over the faith itself. As long as men are more anxious to convict others of wrong thinking than they are careful to model their own lives on the perfect and divine pattern the Christian world will never know peace, never

proclaim the truth, never walk in the light, and never be filled with that life that filleth all things. It is a tragic fact that the bitterest wars known to history have been religious wars.

What was Christ's great commandment if not "follow me"? That is an appeal to each individual soul. What is demanded is, not mere tolerance, which may be only another name for indifference, but love. The love of God, we are warned, can not dwell in the man—can not even be known to him—who hates his brother. It is from the divine love in the heart of man that true tolerance flows. How little of this love there is abroad in the world is proved by the prevailing—and monstrous—intolerance. Christianity, as it is exemplified and exhibited by many, sadly needs to look to itself.

The star that led the Magi and brought such joy to them, may still be followed in spirit, and will guide and lead to the same blessedness if men will but follow. The trouble is that there are so many "lights" that have in them nothing of the divine, and by these people allow themselves to be confused and betrayed to their own hurt. Holman Hunt's great picture, *The Light of the World,* tells the whole story, which is of a Leader almost begging for what is His divine

right—that is, the privilege of leading. It is a representation of divine love almost to the point of divine humiliation. And that is the way of love—even of true human love.

Surely something like this is the message of Epiphany. Nothing is known of the subsequent life of the Magi, but it must have been the nobler because of the faith that they had shown, the experience which they had undergone. No such revelation can come to a man without making him a better man. If Christians are not better men because of their Christianity, the fact only proves that they have never had the revelation—certainly not in anything like its fulness and glory. Yet the light has never ceased to shine. Do men desire and love it—or are they afraid of it?

VII

REFORM AND RENEWAL

THE very word "reform" has beyond question lost caste in the last few years. Indeed it is sometimes difficult to say just what it means, so many are the reformers, and so varied the type. One thing the word certainly does mean is change, whether for better or worse it is by no means easy to say. Reform is almost always an external thing—a law, a new social adjustment, a more equitable distribution of property, to mention only a few of its manifestations. It is assumed that when these matters, and others akin to them, are tended to, all will be well with the world. But men are beginning to be—indeed have already become—skeptical, and with good reason. There are always factors in the equation of which many of our reformers never take account, factors which may, and often do, bring to naught the most wisely directed efforts of man.

The trouble is that we seek to improve character by improving the conditions under which men live—and that much has been accomplished in this way is undeniable—never realizing that if character were what it should be conditions could be left to take care of themselves. Often, too, the programs and schemes of certain reformers have no bearing on character, and were not meant, and are not claimed to have. Improved ways of doing things do not always issue in nobler and finer living. Quite the reverse is sometimes the case. The man who refrains from doing a thing simply because it is forbidden, and for no other reason, may be anything but a good man—his moral and spiritual nature may be utterly untouched.

On the other hand, if that nature had been molded and inspired by the divine influence, there would be no need to tell him what he could and could not do. In our efforts to reform society, we have almost entirely overlooked man, the individual, and his great and sore need for reform. There can be a good society only as the units composing it are good.

This is nothing more nor less than Christianity on its social side. In writing to the Romans St. Paul said: "I beseech you therefore,

brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect, will of God." Here the call is, not to reformation, but transformation—transformation into the likeness of God and into a state of mind that shall be wholly obedient to the divine will as the result of sharing in the divine nature. It was to be transformation, not through social adjustments, or theological technicalities, but through a "renewing" of the mind.

The process is an inward process, and the movement toward perfection is from the inner to the outer, and not, as is so generally thought, from the outer to the inner. There is a widely popular philosophy that teaches that all a man needs is a chance, and happy is he to whom a chance is given. But some of the greatest victories for God and truth have been won by men who, humanly speaking, seemed to have no chance at all. But they had been "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," and had realized that "the aids to noble life are all within."

The most important relation into which a man can enter is that between himself and God—if that is right all else will be right too. It is the same even with those who deny the existence of God, for in that case there can be the same inner relation between the soul, spirit or mind of man and all that he knows to be highest, truest and noblest. The process is the same in both cases, and the results will be the same. The point is that there must be transformation rather than mere reformation. Such is the teaching of the philosophers, Christian and pagan.

"The aids to noble life are all within." But the noble life is far from always being the comfortable life—which latter is the only ideal that certain of our teachers seem to have or to value. Much, if not most of the talk about "standard of living" is wholly, and often grossly, materialistic, and that is true of a good deal of our reform gospel. It was this spirit with which Christ dealt in His discourses on life and its nature. In St. Luke's Gospel is the following: "One of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of

covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Men read these words over and over again, or hear them read, without apparently having the remotest idea that they mean anything. Yet they contain the whole Christian doctrine as it bears on the relation of men to the things of this world and toward the things of God. Before this ideal can be realized and put into practise there will have to be a transformation of human nature, and a "renewing" of the mind. Reform and legislation are powerless to effect these.

"Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"—so says the great apostle. Men to-day are talking and writing of the need for relating religion to life, and that need is great and obvious. But does this mean that we should make religion "practical" in the ordinary sense of the word? Surely not. It means rather that we should make life impractical, from the ordinary, human point of view.

The relation, if it is to be fruitful, must be between life and religion at its very highest. Only so can life be transformed and the mind renewed. Only so can men ever hope to know "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"—and obey it. It is time for the churches to have done with neglecting, glossing over or explaining away this part of the teaching of their Master, and His immediate followers. It is time for them to abandon the attempt to enforce on men and women any special theory of creation, and bend all their energies to the vastly important work of re-creation.

It was in this latter that Christ's great interest lay. He made His meaning very clear—painfully clear to many. Religion, if it is to sur-

vive, and be helpful, must indeed be related to life, but related in such a way as to make the life which it touches sweeter, finer and stronger, and more divine. Than this nothing could be more divinely practical in the eyes of men who count themselves Christians, nay, of those who count themselves wise in the wisdom of the great philosophers who without exception exalted the spiritual above the material. It is the business of Christianity, not to make men "succeed," but to make them good and true, to give them a vision of the spiritual kingdom, which is the Kingdom of God. There could be no nobler mission.

Transformation as used in this connection is only another name for regeneration, or the new birth. "Ye must be born again," so Nicodemus was told, and he asked: "How can these things be?" There are many to-day who are in like case, many who, even in the work of reform, are laboring "for the meat which perisheth" instead of "that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Such are thinking of living and ways of living rather than of life itself, that great and sacred gift to man which he holds in trust. The divine way, that is through an inward operation in the individual soul, may be slow, but it is certain, and no other method is.

There is no man who can not, with the help of God—and without the help of the legislature—transform himself, and renew his own mind. One of the results of it all is set forth by the apostle in the same epistle in which transformation and renewal are commanded: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." That is a very practical conclusion to flow from such exalted premises, but it is often so in Scripture, as when St. Paul closes his great argument for immortality with what seems to some—though it really is not—an anti-climax: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." That is an admonition to live as those should live who are conscious of possessing eternal life. So in this case, one of the fruits of renewal and transformation must be, if they are real and effective, humility, which is one of the greatest of the Christian graces and virtues.

It all has a very practical bearing, for it involves knowledge of life, and of what it ought

to be, and of duty. Men thus regenerated—born into the new life—will very humbly ask that "they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same." There are many quite able to "perceive what things they ought to do," and yet do not do them, or even have any desire "faithfully to fulfil the same." Both the knowledge and the will are necessary—and with them the power. It is for these that a man strives, when he strives to enter into the new and divine life, strives to learn "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

The problem is one of making over as many men as possible in the shortest possible time. And that is a problem for the churches and schools—and the home. It can be solved, if there is a will to solve it—that is, assuming that Christianity is true, and that Jesus Christ can be trusted. It may be that the churches are concerning themselves overmuch with social schemes, and have "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith."

It is only through the spiritualization of human life that transformation and renewal can be brought to pass. For man is a spirit, as God is, and the essential relation is that between these

two spirits. With that established or in process of establishment, we should soon have a civilization of which there would be no need to be ashamed, and in that particular very different from the civilization which we now know. The task is difficult, but its challenge ought for that reason to be all the greater. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"—there is not much that is easy in the truly Christian life.

VIII

THE FIRST MIRACLE

In St. John's Gospel we have the account of the first miracle of Jesus, that of turning water into wine. The occasion, as all readers of the New Testament know, was a marriage feast, and the place, Cana of Galilee. It is written: "When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants who drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine till now."

Foolish attempts have been made to show that the wine—both that which was exhausted and that which was miraculously made—was not real wine. The language of the "governor of the feast" would seem to be conclusive on that

point. To draw any general conclusion from this incident applicable to present conditions would be most unfair and wholly unreasonable. Yet one thing would seem to be clear, and that is that the regulation of the use of wine involves no religious question or principle. Whatever the state does in such matters is based on what is believed to be a wise expediency, on what is thought to be regard for the social welfare. When Jesus used His divine and miraculous power to turn water into wine, no Christian surely can say that the use of wine is wrong in itself or in violation of the principles of Christ's religion—but wrong only as it is in violation of the man-made law, a law which is believed by a majority of the people to be wise. "This beginning of miracles," so the account concludes, "did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." It was the poet Crashaw who beautifully wrote: "The conscious water saw its God and blushed."

The theme, however, is not prohibition or anti-prohibition, but rather the distinction between rules, that may have only a transitory value, and eternal principles. Of the former we have few from Jesus, but of the latter many,

principles which never have been and never can be set aside or repealed. The sins which He condemned most severely were not outward sins, mere sins of the flesh, but sins of the heart, such as pride, hypocrisy, covetousness and externalism—as the washing of the outside of cup and platter while leaving the inside foul. What He sought was the control of man's heart and life by the Spirit of God working in both.

It is a great mistake to go to the New Testament, or to the Old Testament either, for precedents that shall cover all sorts of cases, and be a justification for any policy or action that may seem to be, and perhaps is, right. The only possible result from such a misuse of Scripture is endless and distressing confusion. The revelation in both is of a God that shall serve as a pattern of life, and of a power that shall help men indeed to become "sons of God."

The truth in the Bible is not always on the surface—on the contrary it sometimes lies deeply hidden, as it sometimes does in the life of men. If we were to rely on the theory of narrow precedents, this first miracle, and also the advice of St. Paul to Timothy, might be found to be exceedingly embarrassing. The only precedent with which Christians need concern themselves is

Jesus Christ Himself, who is "the way, the truth and the life." He is the revelation of God and the God-life, that life to which His followers are called, and which they are solemnly bound at least to try to live. It is a life fundamentally of love of God and love of neighbor.

It is only as we take a broad view of the teaching of Jesus Christ that we can hope ever to get to its heart. He was not a legislator, and He deliberately rejected for Himself the rôle of civil ruler or earthly Messiah. The only compulsion that He ever applied was moral and spiritual, and the only supremacy that He claimed was in the spiritual kingdom. In this particular the church, after all these centuries, has still much to learn from Him. The codification of life, so to say, came later, and as the result of the efforts of many of His sincere and earnest but misguided followers.

Yet St. Paul, under the inspiration of His Master, gave the world a code which it would be well if it were observed: "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate."

Such was the message to the Romans, the haughtiest people on earth. Here is indeed a code, but it is one which there is no possible way of enforcing, and for the violation of which there is no earthly penalty. This code is nothing more nor less than a vivid portrait of the Christ-like character, of that nature into which men are supposed to enter when they are "born again." It is also a portrait of man at his very best, of human nature as it is purposed to make it.

It seems clear—or should seem clear—that the object of Christ's revelation was not primarily the control of conduct, but the creation of character. And conduct itself, as is also made clear, consisted not so much in observing certain rules, as in doing the will of God. The will of God, such seems to be the thought, was to be apprehended through companionship with God, and with Jesus Christ. Man's true life, we are

again told, is "hid with Christ in God." Very mysterious this will seem to some to be, yet it is very real. "Great," says the apostle, "is the mystery of godliness," though there is little mystery about godliness as many conceive it, and the Christian life, with some, is rather the flaunted and paraded, than the hidden life.

Companionship and communion with the divine life and its source—these are what are needed, these are the great and fine things. It is only through the spirit of man that there can be communion with God, who is Himself a spirit. And without such communion there can be no approach—no possibility of it—to the divine perfection.

Men talk and think of mysteries as though they were strange, shadowy and far-away things, when they are as a matter of fact the stuff of which life is made. Life itself is a mystery—and there is none profounder—as man himself is. We live and move among mysteries—pain, sorrow, death, sacrifice and the great heroisms which history records. Religion is a mystery, for it is simply the relation between two eternal beings, God and man. Companionship with God is both a mystery and a miracle, yet it is a possibility, and one that may be and was

meant to be an actuality. It is only as it is realized that there can be in the heart of man any of that "peace of God which passeth all understanding."

The Gospel is an appeal to all that is best and noblest in man, and a most tender and moving appeal. Christ seems almost to assume the rôle of petitioner for man's love. "Behold I stand at the door and knock"—it is for man to say whether or not he will open. To think of the Gospel as the expression or manifestation of a mere lawgiver or a law enforcer is utterly to misconceive it, and to lose most of its power. This humble attitude was also that of even the most imperious of the apostles.

Writing again to the Romans, St. Paul said: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." "I beseech you"—this note runs all through the New Testament. It is well to think of the Gospel sometimes as an appeal or cry to man, inspired by love for him and tenderness toward him. Some sermons are being preached to-day from which one could never by any possibility get any such conception. Sternness there must be in this world, as there was sternness in the nature of Christ, but gentle-

ness and kindliness there must be too, and with these His nature overflowed.

If men could occasionally think of themselves as servants of one another rather than as masters over one another, perhaps we should soon see the Kingdom of God come with power. The goal of it all is very obviously character, and with that imparted, nourished and developed there will be no question about conduct. Christianity is all summed up in one great Example or Exemplar, the divine and ever-seeking love of God for man. It is all removed by an infinite interval from social schemes and adjustments, and still further from the idea of perfection through and as a result of legislation.

So Jesus in His first miracle "manifested forth His glory" in a way that seems strange to many people of our day. But He manifested that glory in many other ways in His inexhaustible love, His never-failing patience, His divine pity, His gentleness and purity, His marvelous tolerance, His absolute devotion and loyalty to the truth, and in His great sacrifice. Yet glory was the last thing He thought of or desired—"I seek not mine own glory." His example is both a rebuke and a challenge; the one must be deeply felt, the other must be accepted by all who are worthy to call themselves Christians.

How vain and foolish, therefore, it seems to be to look for narrow rules of conduct, or to search for so-called precedents in such a life as this, in such teachings as these! The scope of both is infinite, and both take hold on eternity. "The liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" is really servitude—servitude to the divine will, to the great Leader, and to one another. Even human liberty, as we conceive it, can not survive unless it is animated by something of this spirit. Christ was free as no other being ever was, and yet He served, though He was Lord of all. The qualities which He blessed were beyond the power of any law either to create or destroy. When they are shown in human nature they are its chiefest, if not its only glory. At any rate, they constitute the only glory that can be consciously sought and striven for without harm to the soul of man.

Men to-day need much greater knowledge than they often seem to have of the Bible, and of its purpose and object, by which they set such great store, and of which some of them appear to have such strange theories. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

IX

SAINT PAUL

NEVER were the power and world-wide influence of one man more remarkably illustrated than in the case of St. Paul, whose conversion is commemorated on January twenty-fifth. However men may explain his conversion, of the fact of the conversion there can, of course, be no doubt. There is quite as little doubt of its consequences. The subject is of special interest at the present time, of interest both to Jew and Christian, since both are discussing the nature, work and purpose of Jesus. One can not get very far in that discussion without going into the relations between Him and the great apostle.

There always have been some holding that Christianity, as we now have it, and the Christian church, are the work of St. Paul—that he rather than Jesus was their founder. Only a short time ago a learned Jew insisted that Jesus was to the end of His life a loyal and devout

Jew, with no thought of setting up a new religion. Others, while holding that a new religion and a new church were founded by Jesus, still think that both are very different from what they would have been, and were meant to be, as the result of the work and influence of St. Paul. A writer in the *Britannica* is of the opinion that St. Paul understood his Master better than any of the other apostles, and had a much clearer view than they had of His purposes for mankind.

There is manifestly no possibility of reconciling these opinions and theories—fortunately, it is not necessary to do so. Thus much may be said, and on this all can agree, and that is that had St. Paul never lived the probability is that Christians would have constituted hardly more than a sect within the Jewish church. That leaves only the question whether that was what Jesus meant them to be. The difference between Pauline and pre-Pauline Christianity is obvious.

Was the development a false one? Neither St. Paul nor any other man can, or could know fully the mind of Jesus, though many all down the centuries have felt that they were in possession of all the truth. Yet it is certain that the founder of Christianity intended His religion to

be a world-wide religion—and this is what the apostle labored and struggled to make it. But much more interesting, and perhaps more vital, is the study of the mind of St. Paul in its dealing with religious truth. Apparently his conversion was instantaneous, though there have been efforts to show that he had become unsettled in his faith, and had been through certain experiences which predisposed him toward the new religion. It may have been so, though of such supposed experiences we have no record. He was recognized as almost a zealot in the old faith, and the mission on which he was engaged when the vision came to him was such as only a zealot could be trusted to carry out.

On the other hand, such a man, one of a deeply religious nature, and one who had been instructed by a liberal Jewish doctor of the law, could hardly help thinking, and thinking deeply on religious subjects. His utter sincerity is beyond dispute, as is his courage in following the truth, as he saw it, wherever it led him, without counting, or even thinking of the cost. Intense as his mind was, it was not a closed mind. We have the right to take certain of the expressions used by him in his letters as throwing light on his old life, and as the products of

an experience with the religion of his fathers that had been far from satisfactory. He may, as many men are to-day, have been firm in his orthodoxy and yet painfully conscious of a spiritual hunger clamoring for satisfaction. That indeed is a very common human experience and is most keenly felt by deeply religious and serious-minded men.

He had, as he thought, proved that "the law," and "the works of the law," were powerless to save, and that they could not, at least as far as he was concerned, give satisfaction and inward peace. It was with him, in the beginning, no question of theology, or correctness of doctrine, but rather of his inner life, and its relation to God and truth. In his letters he speaks, often with a good deal of bitterness, of the law as something that had failed him, and of this he could scarcely have helped having some consciousness, even before his conversion. So it seems impossible to think of him as a man wholly content with the religion to which he had been bred. To this extent, then, there may have been a preparation for his conversion on the road to Damascus.

It may be doubted whether there ever was a sincere conversion without an antecedent prep-

aration, though there may have been no consciousness of it. It should not be overlooked that the call that came to this man was not to acceptance of any creed, but to service, to the acceptance of a new leadership. And never was there more single-hearted service, never more devoted and self-sacrificing loyalty. He belongs in the class with those of whom his Master, while still on earth, said: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." He is also proof of the truth of the words that "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." It is quite impossible to exaggerate the importance of the apostle's conversion. It was in very truth a turning point in human history.

All of which raises a question that is not without importance at the present time. The world is full of religious unrest, and the question is—to what is it due? Men are supposed to be unhappy or skeptical because they find themselves unable to accept certain dogmas, which may or may not be true, dogmas which often have no bearing on life, and no vital relationship to it. Yet may not the unrest be due to what the

apostle's unrest has been supposed to be due, that is, men's failure to get any spiritual satisfaction or peace out of religion as it is presented to them? If that is true, it must follow that much of the discussion of the subject is wholly profitless. The question, to take one point, is not how Christ was born, but what He means to human souls, whether He has power to give to men that deep and abiding spiritual peace and joy which they all crave.

Is there in Christianity for people of our day that which St. Paul sought and found, that which made him rejoice in the hardships which he suffered for the Gospel's sake? Here, after all, is the test. It is practical, and none other is. Yet little is made of it either by modernists or fundamentalists. It is the primary function of Christianity, as St. Paul understood and accepted it, to appease soul hunger, and to make better men and women. The call, as in his case, is to newness of life—to a new life. And the life was, and is, a life of power. The reward, as has been seen, was not to correctness of belief, but to the utterly self-sacrificing life. Christian satisfaction can only come, Christian peace can only be enjoyed, by those who live, or humbly try to live the truly Christian life. At any rate, the ex-

periment is worth trying. St. Paul proved the validity of the principle.

Yet we are more and more making our religion a system of laws, which do not differ essentially from that "law," from those "works of the law," which proved to be in the case of St. Paul, as he thought, utterly valueless. Very many excellent people think of Christianity as a code rather than an inspiration and a life. Dogmas are construed and enforced as statutes—dogmas which are often hard, inflexible and inadequate, inadequate even as expressions of the truth. This tendency is apparently natural to man, and there never was a time when it did not operate. It is operating to-day to the great spiritual loss of mankind.

The trouble is, not that men rebel—on the contrary they are to-day willing, and even eager to be taught—but that they fail to find in the churches what they seek, and have a right to seek. We have reversed the process that was followed in St. Paul's case. He was called first, and accepted first, and later instructed in the faith, which in his day was very simple. All that he knew was that Jesus Christ had summoned him to fellowship with Himself, to service in His cause. In these he found that peace which multi-

tudes of men are to-day seeking, and for which they are longing—but in vain. Clearly—at least so it seems—Christianity is over-organized and over-mechanized, and we are mistaking organization, creeds and machinery for the life of the spirit, precisely as some of the Jews did twenty centuries ago. The old mistakes are being repeated, have been repeated almost from the dawn of Christianity. Will the lesson ever be learned? Especially will Christians ever realize the splendor of their heritage, and strive fully to enter into it? St. Paul was called to the free life—yet the life of servitude, not to rites and ordinances, but to what he believed to be the ever-living Christ.

On these fundamentals, at least, the mind of Jesus and the mind of the apostle were in complete harmony. It is true that St. Paul was the author of a theology, was a most successful system-builder. But commentators have greatly overemphasized this part of his work, and have themselves developed it to such an extent that he would not have recognized it. His concern was with life and character. Believing though he did in the resurrection, he laid great stress on resurrection in this life—the rising from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. He

had the root of the matter in him, and he never surrendered that liberty which he believed he had found in the new religion—nor would he have others surrender it. "The liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"—this he prized, and for this he gave up his life.

Inward peace can to-day be found in the Christian churches, and yet the outsider, reading of the wrangling and quarreling, would hardly look for it in them. Perusing certain sermons one would not think that they were inspired by that divine love incarnated in Him whom the preachers of them profess to serve—nor are they. So it is that men to-day are seeking to escape from a system which is certainly, in many of its aspects, not unlike that from which St. Paul turned, and from which, as he believed, his wonderful conversion had delivered him. Surely there is a lesson, and a sorely needed one, to be derived from that epoch-making event that took place on the Damascus road twenty centuries ago. The question is whether that religion into which St. Paul was baptized shall become a house of bondage, whether "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" shall be preserved in all its glory. And no question can, for Christians, be more important—or as important.

X

FIRST AND LAST

WRENCHED from its context, and treated by a great English writer as though it were a lecture on economics, the parable of the vineyard has suffered seriously at the hands of commentators—and propagandists. Taken in connection with what goes before, there is really little in the parable that needs explanation. A householder had in the early morning hired laborers to work in his vineyard, and had agreed to pay them a penny a day. At the third, sixth and eleventh hour other workers were hired, the only promise of pay being "whatsoever is right—that shall ye receive." "When even was come" those who were hired last were called first, and each man received a penny. Those who had toiled throughout the day received also the penny for which they had covenanted, and of course they complained—and naturally. But the story was told simply for the purpose of illustrating a

great principle, set out in the closing words of the preceding chapter: "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

So it often is in life, and so often it ought to be. The parable, in other words, is a picture of human life, and the very injustice in the distribution of rewards for toil is an essential part of it, for without it the picture would not be true. The efforts that have been made to prove that justice was done are, therefore, quite futile, or worse, since their only effect would be to destroy the point of the parable. "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first"—that is the teaching, and it is profoundly true. So the parable closes with a restatement of the teaching with which it began: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." That is simply life as all well know, and many have experienced it. That is, earth's rewards are rarely justly apportioned.

But there is, of course, a deeper meaning, which ought to be clear to those who have entered at all into the spirit of the teaching of the Speaker of the parable, and as far as the parable illustrates this it describes a condition of absolute justice. Take the words "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first" in con-

nection with the words: "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here then is another reversal of what men might suppose, and did suppose, was the natural order. What is meant is that continued primacy is never certain and ought not to be certain, that it must not be presumed on, and that when presumed on it is always in danger of being lost.

There is another incident immediately preceding the parable which throws still further light on it. After the rich young ruler had rejected the invitation to fellowship with Christ, being unwilling to make the sacrifice demanded, St. Peter said, perhaps in a somewhat boasting spirit: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefor?" Here is the answer: "Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father,

or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Then it was, and to His loyal followers, that the warning was given: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." It is to-day, as twenty centuries ago, a warning to the supposedly elect, who may find themselves "last."

It is a remarkable fact that Jesus so often preferred the companionship of those whom the world counted "last" to that of those who proudly counted themselves "first." Yet it was so, as we all know, though we do not seem to derive much benefit from the knowledge—and we should derive much. Men have, for instance, discussed this great parable on the theory that the issue was as to the justice or injustice of the action of the householder in the payment of wages. That, however, is a mere incident. Plainly what the Teacher sought to do was to impress on His disciples—and His words were addressed only to them—the great sinfulness of spiritual pride, especially as exhibited in connection with their relation to God. "We have forsaken all, and followed Thee"—and it was so. The service was loyal and the sacrifice was great. The reward was promised—"But many

that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

And this was true even of those who had "borne the burden and heat of the day." To bargain, or to attempt to bargain for reward for service rendered in the spiritual realm is to cheapen that service, and to reduce the transaction to the commercial level. So even the twelve disciples who undoubtedly were, as they still are, "first" might quite conceivably become "last." The lesson is one that needs to be sternly preached and sharply applied—applied now, as of old, to those who profess to be disciples. It is a lesson in humility, and in true and accurate self-appraisal. The more the parable is pondered in connection with the great principles so often proclaimed by Christ, the more vital—and comprehensive—will its teaching come to be, and the more will it conduce to the development of the spiritual life, and to the clearing of the mind of pretense and cant. What is in truth condemned is mere professional piety.

Though Christ's parables were all designed for special occasions, and to enforce particular truths and principles, they all have a universal application, and there never, as far as one can see, can come a time when they will not be ap-

plicable. The one under consideration we may surely construe as a condemnation of selfish and arrogant nationalism, of race pride as taught by the glorifiers of this race or that, and indeed of the whole idea of a "chosen people." For it plainly teaches that no man, nation or race, is securely and irremovably "first" beyond the possibility of at any time becoming "last." There are, of course, those who are first and those who are last, for this plainly is set forth in the words of Christ. The thought is that those who are last may win the divine favor, and thus become first. The case is one of the reversal by the divine wisdom of human valuations—especially self-valuation.

Nothing is more demoralizing to the soul of a man than for him to think and feel that he is in a peculiar sense the favorite of Almighty God above his brethren, and that God is in a special and intimate sense "his." When men get into that frame of mind they are, it may perhaps be said, inviting overthrow and spiritual ruin. Secular history affords many illustrations, and, of course, both Testaments are full of them. It is much wiser and safer, much more in accord with the teaching of Christ, for people to think of themselves as "unprofitable servants"—and

this too is much nearer the truth. "Thou hast made them equal to us," so the all-day toilers in the vineyard said. The words are often on the lips of men, and there is always the silly fear in the human heart that some one else may be "equal to us." We must be "superior," and be acknowledged as superior, or else we are unhappy, so narrowly jealous is human nature.

And so of nations and races, which are to-day so offensively boasting of their power and greatness—though not so much of their virtue. Babylon, Nineveh, Egypt, Persia—these were all once "first," but this can not be said of them now. During the Great War much was made of Germany's slogan—*Deutschland Ueber Alles*—yet the words but echoed and reflected the spirit that is common to all nations, in greater or less degree. But it is in connection with races that the folly is presented in the most exaggerated form. Writers have labored to prove that "the promises" are to the Nordics and to no others. It is the Nordics that are "first," but are they? If so, there is still the old danger that they may sink to be "last." Indeed a recent writer has striven to show, and with some success, that there really is no Nordic race—are really no races at all in any distinct and definite sense of the word.

Of course the Christian doctrine is that all men are God's children, and that God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth. The work of each is to do the best it can, and to be as helpful as possible to others. There are advanced and backward races, and it is plainly the duty of the advanced to help forward the backward in every possible way. There is no place for boasting, which, as the apostle says, is "excluded." Haughty race pride is as wicked and dangerous as any other pride, and should have no place in the heart of the man who realizes that God is the God of the whole earth, and that all men, of all nations and race stocks, are His care. So to races, as well as to individual, the old and solemn warning comes: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Cooperation, rather than strife for preferment and prominence, is the law of the Christian life as taught and lived by the Speaker of the parable.

So the parable is, it is believed, on its face a picture of human life with its inequalities and injustices, and in its deeper significance a graphic presentation of a spiritual law or principle on which is based so much of the teaching of Jesus. It was spoken to those who may be

said to represent the clergy and religious leaders of all time—in other words, to all who may think they have a special reason to feel that they are "safe" because of their position, their works and sacrifices, and their supposedly favored relation to Almighty God.

It is a bad sign when men begin to ask "what shall we have" by way of return for doing duty—it is a bad sign because it points to a wrong spirit. It is well for such to realize that the meaning of the parable is that as much as is given to them will be given to those who have done far less work but who have not covenanted for a reward—not even for the "penny a day." There is no such thing as hire in the spiritual world, and surely there ought to be no hirelings. The great reward in the spiritual life is the life itself, with the joy of sharing and participating in it. Finally—for this seems to be the necessary inference—all who share at all in that life, which is the great reward, will, and indeed must, share on equal terms. In that state there will be no "first" or "last"—there ought to be none now in the sense in which the words are generally used.

This beautiful parable suggests many thoughts, opens up many lines of reflection, and

is as profound in thought as it is simple in framework and structure. It is so with all the parables, which ought to be read, not as mere stories, but as great sermons, with messages for all men and all times, messages that never grow old, never lose their power and inspiration. "So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many be called, but few chosen."

XI

SUFFERING

It is impossible for a thoughtful man to read history without being tempted to conclude that the overwhelmingly dominant factor in the life of humanity has been suffering, and often suffering of the most terrible sort. The wonder is that men and societies could have survived under the cruelty, oppression, tyranny, persecution, corruption and torture to which they were subjected. The struggle must have been fiercer and more savage in certain historic periods than it was even in prehistoric times. Job's friends were not always right in their interpretation of life, and of the ways of God toward man, but it would be hard to disprove this statement of one of them: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

History is largely a record of tragedies for the very good reason that tragedies have played so conspicuous a part in the life of the race. Yet even in the worst times there must have been, and

indeed we know that there were, people who lived in comparative comfort, security and happiness, who went about their daily tasks much as men do to-day, who cared for their families and loved them, and who looked on the perils, by which they must always have felt that they were menaced, as part of the natural order of the universe, things wholly to be expected. But for such as these, many states and societies that survived thousands of years would have perished almost overnight.

It seems as though there was no limit to the capacity of human beings to endure suffering, as there was no limit to the delight in imposing it as shown by the beasts whose names pollute the record of human experiences on this planet. There could be no better medicine for the pessimists of our own day than an acquaintance with such facts as those to which reference has been made. We are living in a paradise as compared with the Rome of the later Cæsars, and even with the Middle Ages which it is rather the fashion to praise.

The trouble, of course, was not with the times but the people, for it was by the people that the times were made. Men have for thousands of years been trying to learn how to live

together as rational beings, and they have not even yet wholly mastered the art. Whether we call the defect original sin, or man's beast inheritance is less important than it is to realize that the defect existed, and has not yet been eliminated. Life, sings Tennyson, "is not as idle ore"——

> But iron dug from central gloom,
> And heated hot with burning fears,
> And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
> And battered with the shocks of doom
>
> To shape and use. Arise and fly
> The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die.

It used to be thought and said that all this misery and suffering were ordered by God, and that they were part of the discipline of the race. Yet it is clear that they were man-made. And it is hard to see how there could have been any value in a "discipline" that debased, terrified, degraded and often destroyed whole populations. Even those who survived must have been the weaker for their experience. Through a demoralized social order individuals and families are demoralized, and ideals are weakened and sadly dimmed. One may not know what the

race would have been had it known nothing of the horrors by which it has been accompanied on its march. That there was some educational value in it all one must believe, and it may be that humanity as a whole is stronger because of the trials to which it has been subjected. It certainly has been strong enough to lessen and soften them, and as a result of human effort, life is sweeter, saner, kindlier and nobler than it ever was before. All of which simply means that men have made the best of things and got what good they could out of their sufferings and sorrows.

Governments have helped little, if at all. Often, if not usually, they have been positive hindrances to the development of mankind. To them man certainly owes little or nothing of the happiness that he has managed to command. Governments have always stood strongly for the existing order, and as the existing order was almost invariably bad there was little help to be looked for from those in authority. Even when a good ruler did try to help the people, and to relieve their suffering, he was likely to be assassinated, often by the very ones whom he sought to serve. "The glory that was Greece" as well as "the grandeur that was Rome" were both shamefully tarnished, and that is true of prac-

tically all the ancient civilizations—and of many modern ones.

Man in the aggregate seems less admirable than man as an individual, and yet it is to man in the mass that we even yet mostly look for improvement—man in the mass as represented by government. The average intelligence of a mob is probably lower than that of the most unintelligent member of it. It is, as has been suggested, the old question of human relationships, and of the exceeding difficulty that men meet with in trying to order them rightly—and intelligently. Reading of the follies of the past, one marvels that they could ever have captured human minds, yet they did, and in so doing influenced the course of history, and for the worse.

If men are the architects of their own fortunes, it is quite as true to say that they are also, in very large degree, the architects of their own woes and sorrows. So it still is, though we have undoubtedly made much progress in the great art of living together like rational beings. History is most gloomy reading as a record of follies and crimes; but it is cheerful and inspiring reading as showing how far we have come.

The parable of the sower has not often been interpreted as preaching the gospel of self-

culture, and yet that is perhaps its underlying lesson. What was needed, if the seed was to grow, was intellectual hospitality along with spiritual receptivity. Some of the seed fell on hard and trodden ground, some on rocky and shallow soil, some among the thorns and the rest on good ground.

The interpretation of the parable follows: "The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

Intellectual hospitality, spiritual receptivity and depth of character—it is these that are to be sought and cultivated, and they are all possessions of the individual. Breaking up the

hard soil, deepening and enriching that which is shallow, rooting out the thorns of "cares, riches and pleasures of this life"—it is to such tasks that men are called, and these are tasks that must be performed if "earth is to reach her heavenly best." Not less important than the relations of men to one another is their relation to the truth, and that is the plain teaching of the parable. Too many seed, in the long and painful history of the race, have fallen by the wayside, on stony ground and among the thorns. Hence the scantiness of the harvest.

Hence also the sorrows of men as recorded in history. Great, therefore, is the need for such self-culture as shall make men sensitive and responsive to truth, willing to face it, eager to follow it, and develop in them the power to make it fruitful in their lives, and in the life of the community in which they live. "That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Honesty and goodness of heart, active beneficence, and patience—these are the great requisites. People have hardened their hearts, starved their souls, and lost themselves among the thorns, and then wonder why it is that "the course of this world"

has not been "peaceably ordered and governed." How could it be?

From age to age people repeat the old mistake of looking outside themselves—to king, president, congress and the law—for salvation and happiness, when they ought to look within. "Those things," so it has been said, "which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man," and defiling the man, defile city, state and nation, and society as a whole.

The Christian religion is at bottom a protest against an external and externalized morality, a mere law morality, as wholly inadequate, and even as partaking of the nature of sin. It is the religion of the "honest and good heart," the heart in which the seed, which is the word of God, can not lodge without bringing forth fruit abundantly. So Christianity is also the religion of the fruitful life, the religion which judges men by their fruits. There is no other possible test. The church should hold up this ideal before men, and press it home with all its power. It is not primarily men, but man, that needs to be redeemed.

The process, of course, is slow, and that is enough to condemn it in the eyes of many, eager for results, and bitten by the speed mania. But it is certain, and nothing else is. The principle of salvation through individual improvement is verified by history. The fact that conditions are far better than they were in the horrible times of which we read is due to the other fact that men and women are better than they were then. Men are more charitable and kindly, more just and generous, cleaner in their lives, and endowed with a much keener sense of their responsibility, both to society and their fellows. They are both bolder in asserting their rights and more conscientious in the performance of their duties.

If the old Roman days could be brought back again, and our gloomiest pessimist could be transplanted into Roman civilization, he would long to return to the civilization which to-day seems to him so hopeless. So there is abundant reason for cheer, not as though we had "already attained," for there is a long and hard road yet to travel before anything even approaching perfection is reached. It may take faith to believe that we shall one day arrive, and yet we have for many centuries been arriving—or at least pressing forward.

Here, then, is ground for encouragement. And we surely need it—and are entitled to it. It is a sad story, that of humanity, and there is much in it that should and must evoke our pity. But it has its glorious side, and there is much in it to kindle our pride in humanity, and in what it has accomplished. It has been a long and hard march, with fighting all the way, but to-day there is more "good ground" than ever before in human history.

XII

LENT

LENT comes every year to remind a careless and pleasure-loving world that the Christian life is not all joy and cheerfulness, and not often has the reminder been more needed than now. No human life, whether it be Christian or not, is all joy and cheerfulness. Men are always surprised and pained, and think themselves very hardly used, when that truth is borne in on them. Clouds, to speak metaphorically, play quite as important a part as sunshine, and may indeed even be a relief. The season which begins with Ash Wednesday is shadowed by the great tragedy of Calvary, and speaks most solemnly of sin and its consequences. Of course it carries many warnings, and of the most serious import. It is not less important as a social than a religious institution. From the dawn of history to the present moment society has suffered from a terrible malady, selfishness. To do as one

pleases, to live one's own life, to get all one can and keep all one can get, to make a god out of pleasure, such is, and always has been the philosophy of many a life.

This philosophy has affected and to some extent influenced both our education and religion. From the former the old ideal of obedience has almost entirely vanished, while to many Christianity is hardly more than a soft and pleasing sentiment in no way inconsistent with a worshiping and following of Mammon and other idols. The concept of sin is repudiated, the need for repentance denied, and the painful truth of punishment for sin is huddled out of sight, if indeed it is not wholly forgotten. We want to be "comfortable" in our religion, as in everything else, whereas one of the most important functions of any religion worth respecting is to make men uncomfortable and dissatisfied with themselves. It is this aspect of it that is presented to the souls of men by Lent, and it is an aspect that greatly needs to be presented. Self-dissatisfaction is the first step toward regeneration.

Writing of Carlyle many years ago, Whitman said: "Not for his merely literary merit (though that was great)—not as 'maker of books,' but as launching into the self-complacent

atmosphere of our days a rasping, questioning, dislocating agitation and shock, is Carlyle's final value. What a needed service he performs! How he shakes our comfortable reading circles with a touch of the old Hebraic anger and prophecy—and, indeed, it is just the same. Not Isaiah himself more scornful, more threatening: 'The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower.'" That is a service which religion must perform if it is to have any effect on character—if indeed it is itself to be a life. "Woe to them," writes another of the prophets, "that are at ease in Zion."

So, at least the great prophets have always so thought, there is much need for "a rasping, questioning, dislocating agitation and shock," especially when it is launched in a "self-complacent atmosphere," which is only another way of saying that that society is in hard case in which the voice of prophecy is stilled. That voice always calls, as it always has called to self-examination, and when that self-examination is honest it results in two things: dissatisfaction with self, and a desire and determination to amend one's life. Difficult enough it all is, but that is just the

point, which is that the Christian life is itself difficult, as must be the life of any brave and sincere man who strives to do his duty.

At any rate, this is the picture of human experience and divine truth that Lent holds up before the world, and it is not wise or safe to turn our eyes away from it, or to blind them to it. For the picture is true, and truth must be faced—be appropriated and made fruitful. Christianity is a call to perfection through discipline and self-sacrifice.

There is altogether too much talk of men being saved, and far too little thought of the necessity for their cooperation in the process—of their to a very large extent saving themselves. Evangelical Christianity often seems to put the whole burden—or certainly the largest part of it—on the Almighty. People think of themselves as being in "a state of salvation" though they may be living the most selfish and worldly lives, and be conscious of no need for repentance, and amendment of life. It is of course a terrible mistake, though a very common one. Theirs is the great sin of self-complacency which Carlyle, and all the other prophets, did so much to shock. Salvation—in the only sense in which the word has any real meaning—can not be forced on a

man, nor can it be the portion of the indifferent and self-satisfied. That, too, is one of the sermons which Lent preaches.

Faith there must be, of course, but what is meant by faith? Not surely the mere acceptance of certain creeds and dogmas, but such a power in the life as will lift it above the selfishness and sordidness of the world, and relate it, in all its activities, to that perfection found in the divine Being. That, and nothing else, is a "saving faith." One dare not be "at ease in Zion." Men do well to look for and expect comfort in their religion, but they err greatly when they demand that it shall make them "comfortable," for who can be "comfortable" contemplating the divine perfection and his own sinfulness? If comfortableness were the true goal of human endeavor man would never have been endowed with a conscience, for that is a great disturber, and it is the glory of man that this should be so. To have a seared conscience is to be spiritually dead, to be one of those who love darkness rather than light, who even go so far wrong as to mistake darkness for light.

Yet people have often belittled Lent by their very observance of it, so frequently is that observance childish and mechanical. They "give

up," as they say, certain things, tobacco, candy, meat or sugar, for instance, and think that there is great virtue in such "sacrifices." Such abstention may have a very real value as a discipline of the flesh—and the flesh is always in need of discipline—but as sacrifice all this amounts to nothing. What are the true sacrifices if not "a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart"?

To those who in his day relied on outward observances, the prophet Joel said: "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." What is needed is a change in life's objective, and with it a consecration to the service of the noblest ideals. And this is heroism in the finest sense of the word. It may involve very serious sacrifices, sacrifices that go to the very roots of being; may involve choices exceedingly difficult to make, as was the case with the young man in the Gospel. Nothing can be more heroic than the manly facing and vanquishing of temptations, nor can anything be more potent in the developing and strengthening of character.

Our age is characterized by a certain cowardice which is deplorable, though we are physically brave enough, notably in great emergencies, such as war. But we are afraid of pain and

death, and shrink from both with a most un-Christian timorousness; afraid of poverty; afraid even of what people may say about us. What does it all amount to—if Christianity is true? Our great Leader met them all, and vanquished them. Even the great philosophers taught that there was nothing that could happen to a man that he could not, if he would, turn to his moral and spiritual profit, and, of course, they were demonstrably right.

Lent is the special season for repentance, which, however, is always a duty. But repentance is implied in everything that has thus far been said. It itself, however, implies many things, among them sin, as a terrible fact. How it came to be it is not necessary now to inquire. That has been the problem of the ages. Perhaps it is in some way related to man's free will—he can be a rebel if he so chooses. Back of that is the mystery of why he should so choose. But sin is in the world, and in every human heart—and hence the need for repentance.

There is the further implication that men can, with divine help, rise above sin—"rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness." One of the greatest doctrines preached by St. Paul is this resurrection from sin in this life. But

there must be war against sin if there is to be victory over it. Here again is a call for heroism, and of the finest kind. It is the call of Lent, and it ought to come with greater and greater clearness and imperiousness as men advance in years, as they approach the end of their journey. The temptation in the wilderness, which is commemorated during Lent, reflects the experience of every son of man. The wilderness lies all about us, and temptations press in from every side, and throng man's path through the world.

As there is a part of man's nature that tends to yield to them, so there is another part which is disposed to fight and resist them. Man is thus, in a very true sense, at war with himself, and what he has to decide is which self, his best or his worst, shall conquer. On the answer to that question everything depends. Harmony is possible only with the triumph of his best self. And it is this which the proper observance of Lent should do much to fortify and strengthen. And that is the good which may be got out of Lent, and here is the answer to the question, so often asked, whether any good can be got out of it.

So we have to do with some of the greatest realities of life—with life itself as a reality. Some of them—sin, sacrifice and death—we are

very much disposed to put from us, but we can not by so doing make them cease to be realities. Only by facing these can men make their religion real, or get any help, courage and inspiration from it. Men are easily deceived, and often deceive themselves by phrases and catchwords, and in nothing is this truer than in their religious life. Against all this Lent is a dramatic protest, for it deals with life as it is, with man as he is, and with the relation between God and man as it ought to be, must be if it itself is to be real. It speaks of sacrifice and self-renunciation as integral and essential parts of human life, and reminds a world that is always forgetting it—or denying it—that life is "more than meat."

Lent is a season for serious thinking and for serious reading, for meditation and self-examination, for repentance, and for aspiration to the very highest things. Finally it is a preparation for that new and higher life, the eternal life of the soul, that dawns on the world with the coming of every Easter. We speak of it as the penitential season, and so it is. But it is more, for it points to the results of true repentance, and forecasts them.

Surely Lent, which deals only with realities, ought itself to be a reality to all, and not a mere

conventional season for the performance of certain church duties, which may themselves, unless performed in the right spirit, become the most unreal of things. It is no mere question whether one shall "keep Lent," but whether one shall get out of it all the benefit and blessing which it offers to men who so sadly need both. It may be a reinforcement to the human spirit, or a mere form, and as such worse than nothing, nay, positively harmful.

XIII

THE CHRISTIAN PARADOX?

RATHER there are many paradoxes in the Christian religion—or what seem to be such when considered from the point of view of the market place. Most of them may be defined as reversals of earthly values—these, for instance, set forth by St. Paul: "As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and, behold, we live; . . . as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." All of which follows the master paradox as given in the concluding verse of the preceding chapter: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It was the sinless One who was "made sin," and suffered because of sin. It is in no way surprising that the same apostle should say of such a gospel that it was "unto the Jews a

stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," but he also said that unto "them which are called, both Jews and Greeks," it was, and is, "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

As far as this divine power and wisdom are not manifested, and brought to bear on human life through the gospel, the fault is with Christians who refuse or fail to accept its scale of values, and to order their lives by it. It is no easy matter for people living in a very practical world to think of dying men as most alive, of sorrowful souls as rejoicing, of the poor as conferring the blessing of true wealth, or of the absolutely destitute as "possessing all things"—and yet such is the teaching, and such is the Christian religion as preached and lived by its Founder. Manifestly it is necessary to know what life and joy and true wealth are, to know something of the only way in which men should care to be "known," if there is to be any understanding of the principle which underlies the apostle's message to the Corinthians—and to Americans as well.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing"—these words point directly back to those other words of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. . . .

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Sorrow, it seems, may be the source and very well-spring of joy, which in this case is not mere happiness or merriment, but something far deeper, and very sacred. Just before His passion Christ said to His disciples: "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." It is permanent and indestructible because it is based on eternal realities. It does not depend on externals, is not bound up with the materialities of existence. So men have for centuries prayed that their "hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found."

The distinction is between the false and the true, and when the true joy is possessed by a man, it may be said of him that he belongs with those who, though "sorrowful," are "alway rejoicing"—rejoicing in the possession of a treasure of which they can never be robbed. To such

natures—and there have been many of them in the long history of the race—even sorrow may be a ministering angel, a refining, purifying and ennobling influence. As it has been said of charity, so it may be said of such a life that it "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." There is in reality no paradox, for what is propounded is one of the basic laws of the spiritual kingdom, and the problem is one of living in it even when one is a citizen in a material universe, which is a most difficult thing to do. Yet it is to such a life that humanity is called.

All this involves the quality of the life, and brings up before the mind that other supposed paradox—"as dying, and, behold, we live." It is a proclamation of the great fact of life through, and as the result of, death. But life in what and of what sort, and death to what, are the questions that religion tries to answer. Once more the false is set in opposition to the true, and it is only as men die to the false that they can ever hope to live in the truth, and rejoice in it. The apostle speaks of it as a dying unto sin and a living unto righteousness—a living unto God. Perhaps it may be said that the choice is between a life in and for self, and a life to God. The antithesis is between the material and the spiritual, be-

tween what is fine and true and exalted, and what is, not necessarily base and low and vile, but selfish, sordid, and, to use the Bible word, worldly.

The summons is to life in the spirit, life in association with all that is "nobly elevating," and it comes, not only from the Bible writers and their Master, but from all great men, sages and philosophers, and poets, whether Christian or so-called pagan, who have dealt with the problems of man's existence. All have seen a life behind and above that with which we are so familiar, and to that they have held that man was bound to aspire. Writing again to the Corinthians, St. Paul says: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." So dying to the former is in very truth entrance into the real life, that which takes hold on eternity through its association with and absorption in those "unseen things"—love, honor, faith, to name only a few of them—which "are eternal." "As dying, and, behold, we live"—no paradox this, but sober truth.

Yet to the "natural man" it is all paradoxical, and in the highest degree. This is quite as true

of the words: "As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Once more it is a question of getting clear ideas about the meaning of the words "poor" and "rich," and of that wealth which is implied in those other words, "possessing all things." In the New Testament is the story of the blind man who sat at the Beautiful gate of the temple, asking alms. He made his request of St. Peter and St. John, who were about to go into the temple. The account continues: "And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."

Here those who were "poor" made at least one man "rich," and beyond his wildest expectations. "Silver and gold have I none"—so it may be said of those who have conferred the supremest blessings on mankind, thus making it

"rich" in the fine sense of the word. Many humble men and women, whose names are unknown to fame, and who were poor beyond our power to imagine, have been "the lights of the world in their several generations," leaving the world richer than they found it in all the graces and virtues with which life must be adorned if it is not to be poverty-stricken. They were, as it is said in another place, "rich toward God." According to the Christian standard, a man may be a beggar though he possesses millions, while the pauper may be the possessor of untold wealth.

"As having nothing, and yet possessing all things," here the subject is again presented, but in a slightly different aspect. For there is a raising of the question as to what constitutes true wealth, that wealth which may be, as it often has been, owned by those "having nothing." It is plainly not silver and gold, for of these the apostles, who wrought the miracle of healing, had none. There are many things that go to make up this wealth. Far back in the Old Testament it is said: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." Shakespeare expressed the same thought when he said:

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls;
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Honor, self-respect, the love of friends and neighbors, the trust and confidence of one's associates, virtue in the old and high Roman sense of the word, learning unostentatiously borne, the willingness to sacrifice self, love of the truth and loyalty to it—these are treasures compared with which all the silver and gold in the world are as dust in the balance. Possessing these, and such things as they, one does in very truth possess "all things." Again there is no paradox, but a very plain statement of fact, a statement which any one should be able to understand, and the absolute truth of which ought to be apparent to all. It is, as has been suggested, a matter of estimating and weighing comparative values, and of striving for the real treasure. There must be many men who would gladly part with all their money if by so doing they could recover their good name, feel again the old sense of innocence, and restore themselves in the love

and confidence of their friends. It would be a highly profitable bargain.

Few things to-day are more greatly needed than that men should take the spiritual view of life, and of their relation to it. This is necessary if we are not to sink into the grossest materialism, not only in religion, but in politics, our ideas of public service, our art and literature. Man is more than body, for there is something in him that directs, rules and controls his body. What that is and whence it comes it is not now purposed to inquire. And it is everlastingly true that life is more than meat.

The so-called practical man—who is usually the most impractical of beings—is perhaps to-day our greatest menace. What we need, and terribly, is men of vision and ideals, who can see through and beyond "the fatted soul of things." Only these can know what life really is, and what are its obligations and opportunities. One of the great temptations is thus described: "The devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the Kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." The answer was—and how many men would have made it?—

"Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

It is a parable of life, of its perils, temptations and trials, and it teaches that if this world is ever to be ruled and ordered well it must be by spiritual forces and powers. There is great need to cultivate indifference to wealth and power, and to much else for which men labor so painfully, plot so shamelessly and sacrifice so much, and by which they seem to set such store. It is as impossible now as when the words were spoken to "serve God and Mammon." It is as necessary as ever it was to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." That, to sum it all up, is the true wealth, which, as is said of true joy, can never be taken from him who has it.

XIV

DIVIDED DUTIES

It is natural for those called, as they may believe, to the performance of a certain duty, to try to argue themselves out of it, and endeavor to find a way of escape from an unpleasant task. Frederick W. Robertson, one of the greatest English preachers, held that in matters of morals first thoughts and impressions were best and most trustworthy, since when men began to reason, at that moment they began to doubt, and often found it easy to persuade themselves that what was right was not "practicable," thus raising questions where in the beginning there would have been no questions, and should be none. And that is very true. When a choice is hard there is never any difficulty in finding reasons for not making it.

Yet life for most people is by no means simple, and it is least simple for those who are endowed with sensitive consciences. Those who

preach, in all its baldness, what may be called the heroic theory, often fail to take account of the very important fact—and it is a fact—that there may be, and frequently are, such things as divided or conflicting duties. Then the question is, not whether a man shall do his duty, or run away from it, but rather which duty he shall do, since he can not do both, and in doing one must leave the other undone. There is the problem, and it is one that is often presented, and in perplexing and painful form. It is necessary to face it bravely, and to strive to solve it honestly. Life is largely made up of such alternatives, and they are responsible for much of the confusion and distraction that prevail, and always have prevailed in the moral world. "Life's business," writes Browning, "being just the terrible choice"—the choice is never more "terrible" than when it is one between duties. "God offers to every mind," Emerson says, "its choice between truth and repose."

But is repose to be won by such simple means? The thought of the duty, sidetracked, as it were, in favor of the one that seems, and perhaps is, more important, must always be to a greater or less extent disturbing. This must be true even in those cases in which the choice made

is believed to be right by him who makes it. The disquietude is not due to the feeling that the wrong choice was made, but to the realization that something has been left undone that was right in itself, and that would under other conditions have been done without question. There is a sense of incompleteness that must be somewhat disturbing.

Certainly it does not seem, as Emerson suggests, that repose can be won by betraying the truth, or gained by "choosing" it. Conscience forbids repose, and makes it impossible on any such terms. On the other hand, truth, though lovely and desirable, and though it is always to be sought, followed and obeyed, is itself a disturber. "Think not," said the eternal Truth, "that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." Yet He promised peace—promised it as one of His best gifts, but it was an inward peace. It is very different from mere repose, for it is positive in its nature, and a great power. To decide honestly, and in the fear of God, to make what is believed to be the best and noblest choice between two courses of action, both of which may be right, and then to abide by the result—thus, and thus only, can be won the true peace, though there may be a total lack of repose.

This is about all man can do amid the distractions and "the changes and chances" of life, and it is much, and perhaps enough. The result is the true peace, if a man will have it so. The difficulty is in abiding by the choice, without speculating about what would have happened if the other choice had been made.

"Life's business being just the terrible choice"—it is so. The question thus is—how shall life be managed and carried on, what shall be its quality? All choices are important, and yet how lightly they are made! There is little thought of their effect on character, and practically no realization that they may be irrevocable. We read in the New Testament of those who chose slumber, when they should have been preparing to participate in a marriage feast. When they woke up, "the door was shut." They got what they chose, but they also suffered the consequences of their decision. Very solemn it all is, but life is not play or sport. It is opportunity, and opportunity may be rejected, as it often has been. That also is a matter of choice. Lowell's words are familiar, but they can not be too often or too seriously pondered:

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to
decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or
evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each
the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon
the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness
and that light.

This is as true in the humblest affairs of life as in great matters, the important thing being that very often "the choice goes by forever." Quite as true is it that the effects of the choice may be lasting, whether for good or ill, and even have a determining effect on life and its quality. While men should not be gloomy in facing the problems of life, and above all should beware of taking themselves solemnly, or of exaggerating their own importance, they should certainly be thoughtful, for there can be no more important business than that of living. Nor can anything be more dreadful than a wasted or wrecked life. Duties should be performed unostentatiously, as a matter of course, and without much thought about them as involving hardship, rather than as acts of heroism entitling the doer to any special praise. They are simply a part of human life.

Thus far the thought has been only of the

effect of choices, and of the performance or neglect of duties, on self. But there is nothing that a man does—almost nothing that he thinks—that does not affect and influence others, so close are the relationships that bind people together. There are duties that a man owes to himself, and by these are meant those related to his higher nature, and prescribed by conscience. But there are also duties which he owes to others, and there may here be a real conflict. Some people seem to crave martyrdom, and rejoice in what they conceive to be self-sacrifice, but may not be that at all.

And the question always arises as to how far one may go in sacrificing others in order to quiet one's own conscience. This, of course, is dangerous ground, for all agree that conscience must be supreme. But that is just the question—what, in such cases, does conscience really demand? In Miss Macaulay's interesting tale, *Told by an Idiot,* there is a clergyman always changing his religion, in response to what he believes to be the dictates of his moral sense and his love of truth. But he never thought of his family. Should it have entered into his calculations?

Thomas Arnold, the father of the late Mrs. Humphry Ward, vibrated between the Anglican

and Roman Catholic churches, ending his life in the latter communion. He made many sacrifices for conscience' sake, but for a time his family was reduced to the sorest straits. His wife and children were sacrificed. In such cases there must always be—as there no doubt was in this case—a weighing of duties, and a wise and conscientious choosing between them. Here again there must be choice, and between two courses of action, both of which may be in themselves right. There can hardly be a graver alternative—or dilemma.

If the call is clear and direct, and the matter is one having an important bearing on character, there can of course be no hesitation. None the less human relationships—and there are many of them—count, and ought to count heavily. Men are easily tempted to play the heroic, and to dramatize themselves, and these weaknesses are responsible for much of the confusion in human affairs. Often they think they are responding to the call of conscience when, as a matter of fact, they are merely seeking to be more comfortable. It is no crime to be comfortable, but it is almost a crime to seek to be comfortable at the expense of the comfort of others.

The sacrifice may consist in enduring the discomfort or the hardship—so complicated is the problem. There must, of course, be no juggling with conscience, but also there must be an honest attempt to determine which, in each case, is the true and high call of conscience. No human being can rightly think of himself as an isolated individual, who is free to do as he pleases, or to act without regard to the effect of his action on others of the very existence of some of whom he may be entirely ignorant.

St. Paul dealt with this problem thus: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." If man's relation with God is right—if he is "the Lord's"—other relations will take care of themselves. The problem is thus, not simply moral, but religious and spiritual as well, and it must be so thought of and dealt with if man's decision in cases of this kind is to be right—one in and from which he will take no shame. And that is "the conclusion of the whole matter." To deal honestly with God and self, and in a spirit of charity with one's fellowmen—this comes pretty near to being "the law and the prophets."

St. Paul laid down a great social law when he said: "None of us liveth to himself." It is a law that is often violated, and one that men arrogantly claim the right to violate—hence, very largely, our troubles. The same apostle also said: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." To ignore these, to pass them over, and to act as though they did not exist, or as, if they did exist, unaffected by anything we may choose to do, is to go against the very spirit of Christianity. It is also to go against a fundamental social law. There are abroad many wholly fantastic notions as to the nature of society, which is an organism, and one the prosperity, soundness and safety of which depend on the maintenance of right relations between its component parts and between them and the organism as a whole.

If we were all St. Francises or St. Catherines, society would perish, and by that is meant, not any special social order, but that organic body which has been built up through æons of time by the most painful effort. Next to his duty to God, man's most important duty is that to this great organism, which one must believe is destined ultimately to become the Kingdom of

God. So it does seem that there are, or may be conflicting duties, that there must be a choice between them many times, and that being so, the choice should always be determined by consideration for the welfare and happiness of others, and for "the safety, honor and welfare" of the great social order. A life so ruled will find abundant opportunity for sacrifice and self-denial, and it will undergo them cheerfully, and with a sort of gallantry that will make them indeed a joy. And such sacrifice will not involve the sacrifice of others, no matter how severe it is to self, but will rather tend to increase their happiness and to minister to their true pleasure.

XV

EMPTINESS

Not often do people think of spiritual and intellectual emptiness as perilous to the nature of the one so afflicted, and yet one of the most striking of Christ's parables warns, and in the most solemn fashion, against this very danger. It is the parable of the swept and garnished house from which an evil spirit had departed, leaving it empty. Returning to the house, "he findeth it swept, and garnished." "Then," so the parable runs, "goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

The "house" in this case is of course the soul. It is permitted also to think of it as the mind. Whichever it be, the moral is the same, and that is that the absence of evil is not enough—there must be the presence of good. For if the "house" is not fully occupied by virtue it will be

reoccupied by vice; not occupied, as far as one can compass it, by wisdom, it will be reoccupied by folly. We talk sometimes of empty minds, yet they never are empty—or not for long. What we mean is that certain minds are empty of all that is good and true and serious. It is the same with the soul, as the parable teaches.

Experience, both with self and others, verifies the teaching and enforces the moral. Yet, as experience is a poor teacher, since its voice is so often disregarded, and as the words of Scripture have been so conventionalized as to have lost much of their force and vividness, men and women go through life much as they have always done, carelessly, and with little or no thought of the future or of their need for intellectual and spiritual resources when old age, with its almost certain loneliness, overtakes them. Pitiful is the lot of the old man or old woman with no accumulated capital of wisdom, goodness, honor, truth and beauty on which to fall back. There are, and always have been—perhaps always will be—many such.

It was of those who failed to make, in this respect, wise provision for the future, that the author of the book of Ecclesiastes was thinking when he wrote: "Remember now thy Creator

in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." There is no man who does not know, though he may find it difficult in his youth to realize it, that as life goes on he will have to be more and more dependent on himself for his pleasure and enjoyment. Life surely should be a preparation for that time. But it is also a matter of living finely as one goes along, and of cultivating and developing a taste for "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." It is no choice between the empty and the full mind or soul, but between things with which both are to be filled. On that choice the character of him who makes it very largely depends—his character and his capacity for rational enjoyment.

The discussion has rather taken an educational drift, which was not intended—if indeed there has been any intention—yet perhaps it is just as well. For there is a theory that education is concerned with "drawing out" the minds of the young rather than with putting anything into them. Yet it is by somehow getting things into

those minds that they are really drawn out, and become worth drawing out. But the thought is of people beyond school and college age, those who are charged in some degree with the ordering of their own lives. For such, if they will but think about it, and try to make some practical application of it, the parable must be fraught with deep meaning—must be a warning. It indeed covers the whole of life, in all its phases and activities. In truth it is a picture of life.

To think of the mind first—if the love for the trashy and trivial, whether in life or literature, has been driven out, it will certainly return unless the love for something better is put in its place. The problem is not simply one of banishing what is cheap and unworthy, but of permanently excluding it. For many the task may not, in the beginning, be easy, but it will become easier as the effort is continued and persisted in, and the result will be worth many times the pain it may cost.

Many people think that they have no time for reading or study, but of very few is that true. It is not usually difficult to find time for what one desires to do. Doctor Johnson it was who said that "a man should keep his friendships in a constant repair," and there are not many

better or nobler friendships than those offered by good books. By keeping the mind safe against the invasion of those books that are not good, they perform a service that is beyond price. People sometimes talk of the intellectual life as though it were something for the elect, and beyond the reach of the so-called common run of mankind. There could scarcely be a greater or more demoralizing fallacy. For it ministers to and feeds the intellectual pride of some, and tends to create despair and a feeling of hopelessness in others. Most minds can be trained, filled, strengthened and enriched, and thus the intellectual life is open to all. Certainly it is no jealously guarded preserve, posted with signs warning trespassers to keep out. Many a man who never saw the inside of a college or university has educated himself far beyond most of those who had the advantage of a university training.

It is for each man to say whether his "last state" shall be "worse than the first." A mind garrisoned by the truth need fear no foe, and be in dread of no successful assault, much less of a complete invasion.

But the "house" in the parable, which the evil spirit left, and to which he returned with

"seven other spirits more wicked than himself," is, of course, the soul of man. It should be noted first that it is said of the evil spirits that they not only "enter in" the house, but "dwell there." The result apparently was, not as in the first instance, a brief and easily terminated tenancy, but a permanent possession. In other words, it is dangerous to trifle with things spiritual, since the evil consequences of doing so may prove to be lasting.

That soul is not safe that is merely free from evil thoughts, desires and passions—it must be filled with their contraries. It can not long be empty—it will be conquered and possessed either by what is good or what is evil. Morality, virtue and religion must be of a positive and aggressive character, as was the man spoken of in the parable thus: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." There is a good deal of preaching of a morality that consists in merely not doing certain things, in observing certain ordinances which may have no relation of any sort to the inner and deeper nature of man.

The "house" of the parable was clean, pure, garnished, adorned and beautified—but it was empty, and its very charm and comfort invited the invasion to which it was impossible to offer any resistance. It stands for the life that is merely not bad or evil. To be sure it may be said, and with some truth, that the life that is not evil is of necessity good. But what is demanded—and needed—is a militant goodness, watchful and strong, and ever advancing against the enemy. It is of goodness of that sort that this parable speaks.

The great struggle, as St. Paul is at pains to point out, is in the soul of man, and no one ever felt it more keenly than the apostle. It could not be otherwise since man is a compound or mixture of the material and spiritual, and these are in constant warfare. The apostle who was deeply and keenly conscious of the struggle in his soul, said: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these things are contrary the one to the other: so that ye can not do the things that ye would." "If," he added, "we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

That is, the life that should conquer, can

conquer only as men live it. And if they live it, that life will be a vital and positive force, ever arrayed against the enemies of the soul seeking to capture, occupy and enslave it. In Arnold's beautiful poem entitled *Palladium,* are these stanzas:

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,
And fancy that we put forth all our life,
And never know how with the soul it fares.

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
Upon our life a ruling effluence send;
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die,
And while it lasts, we can not wholly end.

It is only as man rises above his bodily life and enters into the kingdom of love, truth, beauty, that realm in which great philosophers, truth-tellers, saints, poets and heroic servants of mankind have ever lived, that he is or can be truly man. It is surely no stretching of the parable, or forcing an application, to say that it means all this—nay, much more. It is a challenge to the human spirit. "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." It is the active and armed vigilance of the sentinel that is demanded, that is necessary.

Without this guarding of the soul the evil spirits will "enter in and dwell there." The issue has to do with man's true life, the life that is controlled by the higher and diviner part of his nature. It must be aggressive and strong since it is constantly and aggressively opposed by a militant materialism that would drag him down to its own level. To live solely for money, for the gratification of worldly ambition, for the winning of power, for selfish ease or pleasure—this is to surrender the citadel without a struggle. Civilizations have perished, and great kingdoms and empires have been overthrown and buried in the desert sands, because they were based on materialism, a rotten foundation. It is the same with the individual life—it can not be otherwise.

Man's mind and soul must be dominant if he is to fulfil his destiny—and so of the nation. Man's mind and soul must be dominant if he is to be safe. When they are not in control, the evil spirits will "enter in and dwell there." We do not need to go to the Bible for proof, since so-called secular history furnishes evidence in abundance. Selfishness, ambition and greed—all the fruits of materialism—have wrecked countless lives, the lives of men and states. It is necessary that the soul should "upon our life

a ruling effluence send," if that life is to be worthy of man, or at least of such a creature as man is capable of becoming—and often has become. It is greatly to be wished that the New Testament parables might be more carefully studied, and always with an eye to practise or conduct. Few of them go deeper than the one that has been under consideration. It is the parable of the God-life in the soul of man, and it suggests the prayer of the apostle for his disciples that they "might be filled with all the fulness of God"—that is, completely filled, to the exclusion of all else.

XVI

HOLY WEEK AND GOOD FRIDAY

THE week that opens with the Palm Sunday triumph and closes with the tragedy of Calvary has had an influence on human history which it is impossible to exaggerate. There is not an event that happened in that brief span of time—and it is crowded with events—that does not affect and influence the life of man to-day. The entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the betrayal, the arrest and trial and the crucifixion—it is by these that the week is sanctified. In no other week is there crowded so much of what later turned out to be history.

As to what it all means, the Christian world is pretty well agreed. But it has not been sufficiently recognized that it is all a picture of human life at the highest pitch of intensity. Triumph seems to be almost the sure forerunner of defeat and disaster; human saviours, even the

humblest of them, have always suffered at the hands of those they have tried to save, as Moses did, and as men are still doing; to be betrayed by friends is no uncommon experience; and many a good man has gone through a very real crucifixion. "Crown, now—cross, when?"—it is the question of the ages. And it will continue to be asked while time lasts.

The very purpose of the incarnation was that the victim of Calvary might undergo all human experience, thus showing men how to live and how to die. This is what He did during Holy Week, as during every other week of His life. What He went through in the last days of His earthly life was therefore human experience, raised, of course, to its highest power, and in concentrated form. Christianity is nothing more than a sharing of His experience, as far as weak humanity is able to do so—sharing it at least in thought and reverent worship. It is thus that Holy Week is made indeed holy.

Things are made holy, not so much by setting them apart, as by relating them to the common life of man. It is so in this case. Thus life is itself made holy, and takes on a sanctity that it would and could not otherwise have. Everything that happened in Holy Week has hap-

pened, or may happen in other lives. Sorrow is the portion of every son of man, as is suffering. He who has never made a sacrifice has never even tasted of life. One of the greatest mysteries that we know, that has puzzled humanity ever since the days of Job, is that the innocent so often suffer for the guilty. Men used rather to sneer at the idea of vicarious sacrifice, and yet we meet with it almost daily.

In certain stages of Christian civilization martyrdom was almost the law of life. The treason of friends, the cowardice of associates and followers, and finally death—all these are part of the common lot. They all become glorified when one thinks of them as also the lot of Jesus Christ, the sinless and divine. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews puts it thus: "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

St. Paul prayed that he might know "the

fellowship of His sufferings"—we may reverse the thought, and say that Christ knew and entered into "the fellowship" of man's sufferings. It is of this companionship in all the experiences of life that Holy Week preeminently speaks. Shared sorrows become lighter and shared joys holier and more exquisite, simply from being shared. On the cross human life was absorbed into the divine.

It is no mere drama that the Christian world has for twenty centuries reverently commemorated. The sorrows and sufferings of the Son of Man were real and terrible, and they were—and this is a point that greatly needs to be emphasized in this our day—for a good purpose. It is written: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Holy Week is, therefore, a protest against the theory that suffering is necessarily evil, as well as against that other theory that it is invariably punishment for wrongdoing. This latter theory is very old, and it still has a strong hold on men. We see that suffering was good in the case under consideration, for it was

through suffering that Jesus Christ became "the author of eternal salvation." That it was no punishment for the sin of the sufferer all agree, for there was no sin in Him. Thus suffering is a reality, and it may be a terrible one, and it is by no means always the consequence of sin. Jesus made this perfectly clear, as thus: "As Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither, hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be manifest in Him." So it is that through suffering the works and glory of God may be revealed.

This generation greatly needs to learn something of the ministry of suffering and pain, for it may be beneficent and ennobling. Sorrow and goodness may be very near neighbors. Lowell sings of "God's stern winnowers from whose feet earth's chaff must fly." Here the poet and the historian and the social student are in complete accord. And their voice is also the voice of all religions worthy of the name.

Good Friday is, of course, the culmination of it all. There have been many attempts to make clear the offense which brought so dread-

ful a punishment. Jesus was charged with exalting Himself as king against Cæsar, with being a blasphemer, condemned as a heretic, while others have held that the crucifixion had to be if the prophecies were to be fulfilled.

Professor Sumner, who was a great theologian as well as a great economist, explains it thus: "The most frightful injustice and cruelty which has ever been perpetrated on earth has been due to the reason of state. Jesus Christ was put to death for the reason of state; Pilate said that he found no fault in the accused, but he wanted to keep the Jews quiet and one man crucified more or less was of no consequence."

This certainly consists with the judgment of Caiaphas, the high priest, who said: "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." "If we let Him thus alone," others said, "all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." It was, as we should say to-day, "poor politics," for what was feared if Jesus were allowed to live came to pass shortly after His death.

But all this is unimportant as compared with the influence of the Good Friday sacrifice on the

life of the world, and the course of history. The sacrifice is a perpetual and ever-living one, prolonged and continually applied in and through the great sacrament of Christ's institution. He did "die for the people," but in quite a different sense from that understood by Caiaphas. The day teaches much that is highly important that men should understand and take to heart. Here again it is well to avoid sentimentalizing, and to keep clear, as far as possible, of theology.

There are two classes of people—those who believe that God is the sender of, and responsible for, every calamity that visits the earth, and those who believe, and insist that He never sends calamity. To the people of the first class every earthquake, fire, volcanic eruption or plague is a "visitation of God" as punishment for the sins of the victims. These take no account of violations of natural laws as causes, and wholly ignore the teaching of Christ that suffering may have no connection of any sort with sin.

The other class, made up of those who argue that God never sends calamity, and who fear to pray, or shrink from praying for a sick person that "after this painful life ended, he may dwell with Thee in life everlasting," disregard the plain teaching of Scripture, and would rule God

out of His universe except as the dispenser of what they believe to be good, but may be anything but that. Poor afflicted Job knew better. When his wife bade him "curse God and die," he replied: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Now Good Friday clearly teaches that what seems to be the most frightful evil may, as in this case, come from the hand of God, and be ordered by Him. It is impossible always to know what is good and what evil. The very day on which Jesus was crucified we call "good." Suffering is, or may be good. So, calamities may be sent by God, not as punishment for sin, but for the same reason for which they were permitted in the case of Job. The teaching of Good Friday is conclusive both as against those who hold that God sends all afflictions, and always as punishment for sin, and as against those who deny that He ever sends them. In all such cases it is better not to judge, and to refrain from attempting to decide. Men must sometimes be content to face mysteries, and to repose quietly in their presence.

Good Friday witnessed the perfect fulfilment of one of the great laws of life—the law of

sacrifice. So it, as the whole of Holy Week, is a picture, and a part of human life—of that life of course at its highest and best. "It is," as a great writer has said in another connection, "human life in 'the highways and hedges,' and in 'the streets and lanes of the city,' with the ceaseless throbbing of its quivering heart; it is only daily life from the workshop, from the court, from the market, and from the stage; it is only kindliness and neighborhood and child life, and the fresh wind of heaven, and the waste of sea and forest, and the sunbreak upon the stainless peaks, and contempt of wrong and pain and death, and the passionate yearning for the face of God, and woman's tears, and woman's self-sacrifice and devotion, and woman's love. It is only the leaden sky breaking for a moment above the bowed and weary head, revealing the fathomless infinite through the gloom."

There are few lives that have not had what may be called their little Good Fridays. The whole of the week is, as has been said, an epitome of human experience because, if for no other reason, it began with a triumph and ended in a terrible defeat. But it is like life for another reason, that is because the defeat is never final, but only the precursor of a nobler victory,

nobler and more complete, wholly complete indeed. Decay and renewal, defeat and triumph, humiliation and glory, and death as the source of a new and deathless life,—such is the course of man through this strange world.

Surely Good Friday is indeed good. For twenty centuries the cross has been the sign and symbol—and the pledge—of victory, victory over all that is degrading and base, of the God-life over the beastly in the nature of men. One can see "the fathomless infinite through the gloom," and understand something of man's relation to "the fathomless infinite."

XVII

EASTER

It has been said that Holy Week is like life because the defeat in which it issued was not final, but only the precursor of a nobler victory, nobler and more complete. The thought now is of that victory—the Easter victory. It can not be understood except in association with what went before, for there was a foe vanquished, and the triumph was the fruit of sacrifice, as every true and worthy triumph must be, and always has been. So it seems necessary to begin this meditation with the death of Good Friday as the source of a new and deathless life.

It was of course sin that was conquered. Death, one may surely believe, was not so much conquered, as converted into a friend—death which one of our poets speaks of as "sane and sacred" and characterizes as a "strong deliveress." It is a deliverance from the life of the flesh into the life of the spirit—that is, the Easter life. What convinced Mary and the

apostles that their Lord was alive on Easter morning was, not the empty tomb, of which we used to hear, and indeed still hear so much, but their living communion with Him, on the first Easter and the days following. But for this consciousness of His presence and guidance there never would have been any Christianity or Christian church. What was made clear was that Good Friday did not mark the end of a life—that it was really a life's beginning.

It was "through the grave, and gate of death" that Jesus Christ passed to His "joyful resurrection." Yet millions of Christian people to-day look on death, not as a "gate," but as a destination. It is a pity that it should be so, for much of the joy and power of life is lost as a result of this most un-Christian way of thinking. On Easter eve, therefore, it may be helpful to meditate on "the gate of death"—and then on what lies beyond it. As we pass through a gate, so, and in much the same way, we pass through death.

But the Easter triumph cost enormously in suffering and sacrifice, not for their own sake, but in a great cause and for a great end. The cause was truth, and the end and aim was the conquest of sin. This again is life as we know

it. The finer the individual life the more likely is it to be a suffering life, because by its very fineness it will be bound to give and sacrifice itself for others—and for right and truth. When the gift and sacrifice are complete and absolute, and when the fineness issues in perfection, conflict is certain—and victory assured. Such a life could not be "holden of" death.

Here then is the real glory of Easter, a glory revealed in the vindication of innocence, the triumph of goodness and truth, and the proof of the existence of that life which Christ said that He came into the world to give to men "more abundantly." Not long before He had said to His disciples: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

"I will see you again"—it was so. And the sorrow and terror of Good Friday were crowned by the Easter joy. It was when the "corruptible" had "put on incorruption," and the "mortal" had "put on immortality," that was "brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." It is no mere matter of

living again on earth after death—there are several cases of that sort recorded in Scripture—but of what and who it is that lives, and of the nature of the life thus undefeated. Mysterious it all undoubtedly is, and yet wholly natural in the sense of being just what we should expect a good, loving and just God to decree. We should perhaps even be disposed to blame Him had He ordered things otherwise.

"I will see you again"—the pledge was redeemed to the astonishment of those to whom it had been made, beyond the power of some of them to believe even after demonstration. The old association was renewed, the old shared life went on, and the old relation of teacher and pupil was reestablished. The poor men who had been so terribly bereaved knew that they had an ever-living Master and Leader, and were throughout their lives conscious of the closest contact with Him as the source of their inspiration and power. Called to the service, not of a dead, but a living Christ, they went forth to conquer—and did conquer in His name. They were transformed and reborn men. Easter to them was no mere memory, no mere church feast day, but rather an eternal possession, a source of power, and a kindler of faith. They must, as

never before, have understood these words: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also."

The new and risen life was for them, and for all the sons of men, and it was this that the apostles preached—it was indeed the burden of their teaching. No other event in history has so powerfully affected humanity or human affairs, as this assurance that their supposedly dead Leader was alive affected the lives of the apostles, and through them the life of the world. It is, therefore, impossible to think of the resurrection as a detached and isolated event, for it is bound up with the life of the world, and is indeed part of the inner and spiritual nature of man, and "the hope and expectation" of the universal human heart. "Because I live, ye shall live also"—such is the great Easter message. It is into this life that men are ushered "through the grave, and gate of death." "So we preach," writes St. Paul to the Corinthian Christians, "and so ye believed."

If Christ was alive after His death on the cross, He is "alive forevermore," and that in truth is His own teaching. If that is true, it is as possible now as it ever was for His followers to have a living contact with Him, and to have

the same assurance that their Leader is alive, and that His life may be theirs if they will but have it so. Their loyalty is due, not primarily to a set of dogmas, or an ethical code, but to a living person, who is Himself the Truth.

When we think of immortality we mostly think of the quantity of life, rather than of its quality, which is a great mistake. The true goal is not length of days in this world, or mere prolongation of life in the next world, but perfection. St. Paul makes a very practical application of the Easter thought: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. . . . Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. . . . But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth," so the catalogue runs.

Such was to be the life of those who had "risen with Christ." The proof of the possession of the new and risen life was, and ever must be, found in the living of it. Those who are loyal

to the ideal in a material and selfish civilization, are, no matter what may be their formal profession of faith, or lack of it, "not far from the Kingdom of God." The greatest miracle conceivable is the God-life in the soul of man, and yet it is a miracle that has been often repeated, and that is being performed daily. It was St. Augustine who said: "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee."

But it is impossible, even in connection with Easter, to get very far away from the thought of sacrifice. For to live the risen life, to be loyal to the ideal, and to triumph over all that is selfish, degrading and base, of necessity involves sacrifices and often of the most painful sort. Why this should be surprising or disheartening to Christians is hard—indeed impossible—to understand. For spiritual victories can not be won except at the cost of pain—even athletic triumphs take a heavy toll. The old hymn is right when it says that men must fight if they would reign, and that they "can not be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease."

Human life is a great testing time—it tests a man's faith, his courage, his loyalty, tests indeed his character at every point. It is only

as a man emerges with some degree of success from such a process that he can hope to share in the only resurrection over which he is, or may be the master, the resurrection in this life from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It may be that Browning was right when he said that we may perhaps see "by means of evil that good is best." At any rate evil is here and it must be faced and dealt with if life is not to end on Good Friday and is ever to know and experience anything of the glory of Easter.

The test is exceedingly practical—"by their fruits ye shall know them." If the fruits are not those of the new life, then there has been nothing of the new life. The day therefore has its sober as well as its radiant aspect, and one is about as important as the other. Neither can be disregarded by one who would get a true idea of the meaning of the great festival, or derive therefrom the benefit which it has the power to confer. For life, even when raised to its highest pitch, is still life, a strange compound of joy and sorrow, of weakness and strength.

But thinking of victory one must also think of power, and this is imparted by the Easter life, and is an inherent part of it. That is, with the bestowal of this life, is also bestowed the power

to live it. That is a cheering reflection, and it is well to end on this note. The power is the "power to become the sons of God." The divine and ever-living Leader shares His power with His followers, and He said: "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." So with the duty to win goes the power to win, and in that lies the great Easter hope. It is the festival of hope—of eternal hope. It preaches courage, faith, loyalty to duty and to leadership—loyalty to truth and to the true life of man.

There can be no greater or more wonderful power than that to "become the sons of God." This involves a continuous rising or resurrection, and it is to this that humanity is called. Such is its divinely appointed destiny. Nor can there be any other victory which approaches this in grandeur. The new life is simply the old life renewed and redeemed, spoken of in Scripture as "newness of life." It is within the power of all men to achieve it—all that is needed is the will.

We may therefore think of Easter as also the feast of the resurrection of humanity, the freeing of it from the entanglements of the flesh, and its emancipation from the power of those forces that would drag it down. To be "risen with

Christ" means to be armed against the lures of temptation, and proof against the seductions which beset men on every side. This is at least one of the triumphs of Easter, and one of the results of that triumph should be a glorified humanity. There is "a battle to fight ere the guerdon be gained," but the guerdon is immortal life in all its beauty and fulness, "life in God and union there."

XVIII

SACRIFICE AND EXAMPLE

In an old prayer Christ is spoken of as "both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life," and the petition is that "we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavor ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life." That is, the "sacrifice" is the "benefit," and the "ensample" is the "most holy life." Can the two be severed, even in thought? There is no reason to think so, but rather every reason to think not.

First, then, of sacrifice. It is of course something which can not be avoided in such a world as that in which we live. It is, if bravely and cheerfully undergone, for a good cause and from a worthy motive, an "inestimable benefit," in no matter how small a way, both to him who submits to it, and to all associated with him. Sacrifice, as far as it goes, is an essential element in a holy and godly life, for it involves the

taming and subjugation of what St. Paul called "the flesh," and the exaltation of what he called the "spirit." There never was a good and noble life which was not a life of sacrifice. Nor will there ever be.

Man is set in the midst of opposing forces, and they operate on him from without, and also in the depths of his soul. So he is necessarily and all the while in the midst of warfare, he being what he is, and the world what it is. Where there is war, whether it be material or spiritual, there must be sacrifice. And the more heroically the war is carried on the greater will the sacrifice be. Goodness is the subject of conquest, and the conquest is often most costly in pain, and sometimes in what the world thinks of as humiliation. It calls for the greatest heroism, a heroism of which no one, not even he who shows it, may be aware. There is, and we should be thankful that is so, a great deal of human life that is marked, and indeed shot through and through with that great quality.

It has been said that all this is so because of the nature of the world which is man's home. This was finely brought out in an article in *The Century* entitled, "Am I a Christian?" written by Edwin Bjorkman, as thus: "This last form

of symbolism is particularly exemplified and accentuated by the idea of vicarious atonement, which may suggest nothing more than a cowardly escape if falsely interpreted. It does not teach that we may evade the consequences of our own acts through the gratuitous intercession of some one else, but that we are all parts of a common whole, united to each other by the fundamental facts of our existence as the cells of the body are united by tiny filaments of protoplasm, so that daily and hourly we suffer and rejoice, pay and reap, vicariously, on account of innumerable acts in which we bear no open part. There is in all of us a Christ portion that carries the sins of others and helps to atone for them, so that others still to come may not have to pay quite so high a price for the mistakes and misdeeds of the past; a portion that is not of our own choosing, but imposed on us by life itself."

"Imposed by life itself"—that is the truth which it is necessary to keep in mind if men would understand what life is and what are their relations to it. The problem, then, is one of dealing with life in such a way as to be spiritually profitable to the individual, and also of making it, through his spiritual enrichment, helpful to others. This is what St. Paul meant when he

said: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." What we have then is a law, a law of Christ, and a law of the universe of Almighty God, which, we must believe, is of divine appointment. Why any one, after Calvary, can wonder—and even rebel—because the innocent suffer, is past understanding. That great world sacrifice made clear for all time at least one part of the problem of evil.

"We are all parts of a common whole," says Mr. Bjorkman. What is that "common whole"? Here again one goes for enlightenment to St. Paul: "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain together until now." Of that creation man is a part. Being a part of it, Mr. Bjorkman's conclusion follows. That conclusion is profoundly Christian. St. Peter discusses the same problem, and enunciates the same principle, holding the latter to be a Christian call: "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for

us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."

Here once more is the thought of unity—unity in man, unity between him and the universe as "parts of a common whole," and unity between sacrifice and example. "For even hereunto were ye called"—it is so. Why, then, should men wonder, fret, complain and rebel because things do not, as they think, go well with them? They may be going well in a sense of which the sufferer in any given case may have little or no realization.

Life in other words is a test, "the stuff to try the soul's strength on," and that perhaps is its highest and chiefest value. The soldier feels that he is honored when he is entrusted with a difficult and perilous task, summoned to the post of danger. There is surely inspiration in this great Christian doctrine—inspiration and consolation. Life does not so much offer opportunity for sacrifice as make sacrifice inevitable and unescapable in the case of all who would live worthily. For life is itself sacrifice throughout its whole course.

The "sacrifice," which is the "benefit" and the "ensample," which is the "most holy life," are in the life of Christ all one, "parts of a com-

mon whole." So it is in all lives in varying degrees. For none is or can be worthy of imitation unless it be marked by sacrifice, none can even approach holiness in which there are not at least the willingness to subordinate self and the desire and determination to conquer and root out selfishness. It was because He was "a sacrifice for sin" that He was also "an ensample of godly life." If He had not been the one He could not have been the other. That again is life, life at its highest pitch, it is true, but still in essence the same as the life of human kind. Men do not choose as models those whom they can not respect, admire and reverence, nor do they have any difficulty in recognizing the great servants of the race, men and women whose lives were examples because they were lives of sacrifice. In William Wetmore Story's poem, *Io Victis,* is this challenge:

Speak, History! Who are life's victors? Unroll the long annals and say,
Are they those whom the world called the victors—who won the success of a day?
The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans, who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst.
Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges or Socrates? Pilate or Christ?

The purpose is, not to decide between these alternatives, for the decision has long since been made, and made irrevocably, but to make it clear, or as clear as possible, that in each case the noble life was the life of renunciation, and that the "sacrifice for sin," and the ensample of "godly life" were and are one and the same. Therefore, if men really and truly receive the "benefit," they will of necessity "follow the blessed steps of His most holy life." The benefit was conferred that they might do this, and to give them power to do it. If religion does not help toward this end it is of little or no value to any human soul.

But, as there is always danger of self-consciousness, which may easily become the soil out of which hypocrisy flowers, it is better and safer for a man to look for examples to follow rather than to be over-concerned about being an example himself. Some of the finest and noblest examples that have come down to us are those set by men and women who never dreamed that their lives would be so used, and who would perhaps be shocked to learn that such was the case. But surely one can, without sinning against a true humility, resolve to try so to live as to be a help to others, and to use whatsoever talents one

may have been blessed with, to make things better and life sweeter and truer.

To say that at whatever cost men should be true is to say that they ought not to be surprised if they find it necessary to suffer for the truth's sake, for that has been the common lot of truth-tellers, of those who abide by the truth in the face of all temptation to shade it or to depart from it. And there are many such temptations and lures. Men should be very careful in the choice of leaders for their souls, for there are, as there always have been, and probably always will be, many "false Christs," many leaders unworthy of the loyalty of good men. The great test is—was the life one of unselfish devotion to others, a life of sacrifice? Always there are many willing to lead, and pushing forward to claim the right to lead and they deceive many. Such have no rightful claim, and their volunteered leadership should be rejected.

The same thing is true of those who set themselves up as examples, with a "look-at-me" air. None can be more unfit for leadership or imitation than these. It was one of this class who was condemned in the parable, and who, after his so-called prayer, went down to his house altogether unjustified. He who is to be "an

ensample of godly life" must also be "a sacrifice for sin." And he must understand that "we are all parts of a common whole."

It is, to conclude, a matter of knowing life, not in the cynical, sophisticated sense of the phrase, but of knowing it in its essence and true relations—the relations between men, and between men and life, and God. One who gets even a glimmer of the truth will realize that the benefit of the sacrifice for sin will be nothing more or less than the ability and power to follow the "ensample of godly life"—perhaps afar off, but still to follow. "I follow after"—the words are St. Paul's. That is the best that any man can do, but most, if they will, can do that.

"Even hereunto were ye called." To know life is to know that it is full of temptations, sorrows, pains, trials and hardships, but it is also to know that it may be made glorious and beautiful as the result of human endeavor, and that it is the duty of "each in his vocation and ministry" to labor to that end. Man is not a victim of fate, nor a prisoner in the universe of Almighty God. "There's nothing," as Kipling's old soldier said, "stronger than a man." But the true strength is moral and spiritual strength, for man is a spirit, as God is. Faith there must

be, of course, if in nothing more than "a firm intelligible law of things." It is as true of faith, if it be a real power in human life, as it is of love that it "casteth out fear."

There are in our day many strange views of life and theories about it, but one thing is sure and that is that it is a period of probation and testing, and that it is designed to call out—and to call into full play—all that is best, finest, noblest and most heroic in man. Were it not so it would indeed be not worth living. Life is also a molding and perfecting process through the application of which men in very truth become the sons of God. It is a rehearsal or induction leading up to a divine climax, to that mighty victory which is the fruit of faith that "overcometh the world."

XIX

ASCENSION DAY'S BEQUEST

THE bequest of Jesus to His disciples—to His disciples of all ages—on His final earthly separation from them, was twofold, a duty and a power. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." So much for the duty. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." So much for the power. Perhaps it may be said that there was a third bequest, that is success, for with a divine mission supported by a divine power, success was assured, for failure is unthinkable.

There are really only two things that man needs in this world to complete his life—a mission with a consciousness of it, and the power to perform it. Without both these a life is sure to be a failure—certainly from the spiritual point of view. A greater tragedy there can scarcely be than to be conscious of a mission and to feel

one's powerlessness in facing it, unless it be to feel great powers stirring within one and yet to be conscious of no object in life worthy to engage them. In both cases there is a missing of the mark, and the result always is a wasted life. Of such lives Arnold wrote thus:

> What is the course of the life
> Of mortal men on the earth?
> Most men eddy about
> Here and there—eat and drink,
> Chatter and love and hate,
> Gather and squander, are raised
> Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
> Striving blindly, achieving
> Nothing; and then they die—
> Perish—and no one asks
> Who or what they have been,
> More than he asks what waves,
> In the moonlit solitudes mild
> Of the midmost ocean, have swelled,
> Foamed for a moment, and gone.

Perhaps most lives are not of that sort, but many certainly are, more than in our optimistic moments we like to think. Many or few, there is in them no sense of mission, nor is there any feeling of power.

Whatever the duty in any particular case may be, it is a mission. To the man conscious of it, it constitutes his main, if not his only

object in life. The bequeathed duty or mission about which we are thinking was to bear witness to the Testator "in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The first legatees were faithful to it, and to its performance they sacrificed everything that men hold dear, even their lives. But the bequest was to Christians to the remotest generation, and it is as much their duty as it was that of the first disciples to bear witness to their Master and Leader, and to the truth which He was and is.

It sometimes seems as though they do not realize the solemnity of the obligation that rests on them, for the lives of many of them are very much like those pictured by Arnold. It is very difficult for men to make the words of Scriptures real to themselves. This is partly because we have used them unintelligently, resting in conventional phrases, and partly because we have looked on the first disciples as exceptional, and therefore as no patterns for us. They were exceptional neither in gifts nor in the blessings bestowed on them, but were very like us. Exceptional they were in courage, loyalty, heroism and devotion, but only because they knew that they had a great and divinely appointed work

to do, and that in that work they were supported by the power of Almighty God. Yet their work is the work of all Christians, and the power which was theirs may be possessed by all Christians. Their duty is the duty of men to-day—to bear witness both in word and deed.

The bequest is for all time, and to all Christians. Where men lack is in the apostolic courage, loyalty, heroism and devotion, and in the consciousness that they, too, are called to the performance of a divinely appointed work, and in the assurance that they are sustained by the divine power.

But the first disciples would have shrunk from their appalling task—for appalling it was—had it not been for their unshakable faith in God, their belief that His power was theirs, since, as they also believed, the work to which they were called was His work. The power, they found, was real, experiencing it in their lives. The moral, like the duty or mission, is for all time, and it is that with the divine work always marches the divine power. So the bequest of the work was of and in itself a bequest of the power to perform it.

That is a very simple and elementary truth, and yet men find it exceedingly difficult to make

it real to themselves and hesitate to count on it as part of their capital. The case of Moses is in point. He, too, was called to a mighty task. When the call came to him, he said: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He did not understand that the mission and the power went together. The answer of God to his question, doubting his own sufficiency, was: "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou has brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

One of our own prophets, Whittier, spoke in the same strain when he said: "God's errands never fail." Is faith required? Surely, but Christian people profess to have faith, and to live by it. But it frequently is not a living and working faith—is professed rather than deeply felt. There is the trouble. We have substituted belief in certain statements, which itself is sometimes merely a lip belief, for faith in a power, and reliance on a power that can help, sustain, heal and save. Moses believed his great Commander when He said: "Certainly I will be with thee." And it was on that Commander,

rather than on himself, that he relied, to Him that he trusted for success.

Many people to-day resent the idea of a controlled life as involving a sort of slavery. Yet the life that is not controlled in some way and by some thing is certain to be futile and fruitless, as futile and fruitless as those lives described by the poet. Where there is a sense of duty or mission, there must of necessity be control by that sense. One may call it self-control, or think of it as control by "a Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness"—whatever it is, it is real, and it operates. The life that has a goal is controlled by that goal, and the determination to reach it. For the end, if it be kept in view, always determines the means, and this is true in the spiritual world. The poet who wrote of purposeless lives, which "eddy about," also wrote of controlled lives, as thus:

> And there are some, whom a thirst
> Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
> Not with the crowd to be spent,
> Not without aim to go round
> In an eddy of purposeless dust.
> Effort unmeaning and vain.
> Ah yes! some of us strive
> Not without action to die
> Fruitless, but something to snatch

From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal.

The controlled life is, therefore, the directed and inspired life, the life with an objective, and bent on its attainment. There are two sorts of control—two at least—as the Psalmist makes clear in the following words: "I will inform thee, and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go: and I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not like to horse and mule, which have no understanding; whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, lest they fall upon thee." The true control, that to which intelligent beings, with a moral sense, must be subject, is the result of divine teaching, and of divine guidance—"I will inform and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go," and "I will guide thee with mine eye."

Control thus understood means a "setting free" of "body and soul the purpose to pursue God traced for both." It was so with the men to whom Christ's great bequest was first and immediately made. They were free from everything except the obligation imposed on them, which they joyously accepted, and to a discharge

of which they consecrated their lives and every power they possessed, including, of course, the divine power of which they were the recipients. Yet they were not mere passive instruments, for they made their choice—but having made it, they abided by it, and were true to what was their own decision.

The power of choice still remains, and for most men it is not a choice between two sorts of control, but between control and no control, between purposefulness and purposelessness. When it is decided to have a purpose, then the question arises what the purpose shall be. Of course, it is true that there are good and bad controlling influences—habits, passions and the like. But the contrast now is between lives with "a clear-purposed goal" and those that apparently have no goal. The whole object—certainly the principal object—of education, both secular and religious, is to give life direction, and the right direction, to enable a man to say, if not "I am master of my fate," certainly "I am captain of my soul," and to make him, as far as this may be, "zealous, beneficent, firm."

The man who does not make duty his master, and yield to it unfaltering allegiance, misses the whole point of life, misses the only reward, in

this or another world, worth having. That prize is victory over evil—and self. To lose in such a struggle, in which so much is at stake, is, as far as one can see, to lose everything. Human destiny can not safely be trifled with. To "eddy about" or to press toward "a clear-purposed goal"—these are the alternatives. On which is chosen depends the quality of the life—indeed, life is pretty much always determined by choices.

With St. Paul, the race course was always a favorite figure. "Know ye not," he writes, "that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." And he returns to the same thought: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here are purpose, goal, prize and concentration in the effort to reach them. And by them all the apostle's life was controlled.

The mission that was bequeathed to the disciples, and to all disciples is clear enough: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." To bear witness—what does it mean? How are men and

women to do it? Not merely by preaching, not by sending out missionaries, but by living in conformity with "the high calling of God." That is what those first disciples did, and it is perhaps because their lives were what they were that their preaching was with power. So it is the controlled life, controlled by the divine power that inspires it, or should inspire it, that is the best witness to Him from whom the bequest comes. There was not one of the first witness-bearers who could not have said, with St. Paul: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The immediate problem is how to convert Christians, and it is a problem of considerable difficulty. It would greatly help if all could be made to remember and deeply to realize that the duty of bearing witness is the parting bequest of their Master to them as He was about to bring to an end His earthly existence. There should be an appeal in the very tenderness of the association. "Ye shall be witnesses"—but shall we be?

XX

WHITSUNDAY

WHITSUNDAY, or Pentecost, has for many centuries been reverently celebrated as the birthday of the Christian church. The handful of people gathered together in the upper room at Jerusalem were so many individuals, united of course in a common purpose and hope, but still individuals. But through the manifestation of divine power, "power from on high," they were welded into an organism which from that day to this has, often feebly enough, been preaching the Gospel of a Kingdom, and striving to bring men into that Kingdom. To His disciples, just before he was finally to vanish from their sight, their Master had said: "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye here in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Finally, the end of their waiting came, the promise was redeemed, and the power imparted. The disciples had been told for what purpose the power would be

given—"ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

At once the growth and expansion of the church began, for it is said that "the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls," and that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." A witnessing church, a church divinely inspired and taught—such was the infant brotherhood. And the witness was to be borne unto the "uttermost part of the earth." Such were the marvelous beginnings of a wonderful institution. From that far-off day there has not been a time when it was not conscious of its mission—conscious at least of having a mission. It was, and is, to impart to men the truth, and to bring them into loving allegiance to it. There has been no change in the objective, no modification, or suggestion of it, of the marching orders. Pentecost was a great day in the history of mankind.

It is always helpful and enlightening to go back to the beginnings of an institution, whether that institution be sacred, or what we are pleased to call secular. Our Constitution can not be understood without some knowledge of the debates from which it issued, of the opinions of its

framers, of the principles which they held and of the aims which were theirs. So it is with Christianity. Of those first Christians it is written that "they were all with one accord in one place"—there was physical unity. But there was more than that, namely, spiritual unity. For they were expecting something, and all were expecting and looking for the same thing, that is the outpouring on them of the divine power. They knew, too, that the outpouring of that power would impose on them an obligation—the obligation to be witnesses, for the disciples had been told that it was for this that the power was to be given.

In how many Christian congregations to-day can one feel that there is any expectation of receiving something, any agreement as to what it is that is to be received, or any sense of obligation as witnesses? Does the state of mind of the members of one of our Christian congregations resemble in any marked degree that of those first Christians who "were all with one accord in one place"? Surely there must be something of all this if there is to be any reality in our religion.

All that many churchgoers "expect" is a good sermon or a poor one, fine music or the contrary,

a large congregation or a small one, none of which things is of paramount importance. Power was what was sought, expected and received on the day of Pentecost, and in that power men and women went forth to the conquest of the world. They believed the promise of their Master, and waited patiently for, and were blessed by, its fulfilment. These people knew "why they went to church," and they had a reason for going which made it impossible that they should stay away.

It may too perhaps be worth noting that what was bestowed was, not primarily truth, but power. It was the power of truth, of course, for it was the power of God, who is truth. And it was of course the truth to which those who received the power were to bear witness. But the power came first, and it would be well if this order were more generally recognized and observed. For men with the most rudimentary and elementary notions of religious truth, or of the Christian creeds, have been faithful and most effective witnesses to and for God. Truth is revealed of course, but nevertheless men grow into it. If it be but as "a grain of mustard seed" that is enough—at least enough to start with.

There is much wrangling over truth, by

which we mostly mean opinions, or theological views. There is to-day much talk of organic church unity, which is no doubt highly desirable. But more important is unity in the consciousness of a divine power, and in the desire to be filled with it. Such unity can be had without any conferences or negotiations—perhaps there is already more of it in the world than we suspect or realize. The early church was by no means a wholly peaceful body, for it was not long before it had its dissensions and even quarrels. These came when men began to speculate about the truth and to attempt to define it.

There were in the early days, as now, men who valued correctness of opinion more than the outpouring of the Spirit. But in the beginning the thought was of power, a power to be coveted, and when gained to be used for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind. The power was the same power that was to "guide into all truth." The guide must of necessity come first, and later the quest of truth under the leadership and instruction of that guide. It was so on the day of Pentecost, and the order was, and is, the natural one.

In one sense there is nothing easier than to bear witness to God. Indeed, in certain ways

it is impossible not to do so. The very church building, especially if it be beautiful, and such as to inspire reverence, bears such witness, silent, but none the less powerful, "raising," as it does, "our minds from the thoughts of this world to the consideration of the next." Emblems, signs, and symbols, preeminently the cross, speak an eloquent language. All are witnesses, and their testimony is invaluable. Lowell, in his great poem, *The Cathedral,* the cathedral being Chartres, makes all this beautifully and nobly clear.

There is also the witness of nature, nor can there be any stronger witness to the divine love than that borne by human love. In another sense nothing is more difficult than this task and duty of bearing witness, as those who received the Pentecostal gift soon learned and as St. Paul later learned. For when the task involves and necessitates conscious choice, choice between lower and higher, and unswerving loyalty to that choice, then the difficulty of witnessing becomes apparent. It is through the good life that the being and power of God are best revealed. The life, let it be repeated, may be the true life even though it be in possession of but a small part of the truth.

And so it is that Christianity is judged, and rightly so, by the lives of those "who profess and call themselves Christians." St. Paul wrote of, and to his Corinthian disciples thus: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Christianity thus, considered practically, seems to be the life of Christendom, if Christendom is Christian.

The same apostle writes to the Philippian Christians thus: "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness." Thus he would have had his followers witness—witness by their daily lives. Writing to Christians generally, St. Peter said: "So is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

A life, in short, that is filled with the Spirit of God must be a godly life. If it is not a godly life, it has no portion of the divine spirit, no mat-

ter what professions it may make. The test is exceedingly practical—and it is one which Christians must face—as practical as is the business of bearing witness. Nothing indeed could be more practical than either. And it is to this sort of witnessing that Pentecost calls. As has been intimated, the task is difficult, nothing more so. But who would have an easy religion? To make religion easy is to rob it of its standards and ideals, to confess that these have no rightful existence. Men shrink from duty, try to run away from it, and seek—it often seems wilfully—to blind their eyes to it. The alternative is, for Christians, unescapable. The choice is between faithfulness and unfaithfulness—or treason.

Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, faced the issue, an issue which still abides: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." Long before this Joshua said to the people: "If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

So there is not only a Pentecostal gift, but also a Pentecostal call, sounded from age to age, a call to cleanness and purity of life, to integrity, sincerity, courage and loyalty—and to service and sacrifice. The festival speaks of the life of God in the soul of man, and of man as a being whose true destiny it is to live that life, and thus, in however feeble a way, to manifest God to the world. Pentecost is the day of idealism, at which many—it is shameful to have to confess it—are to-day disposed to sneer, a day for the contemplation and exaltation of spiritual values.

In the midst of their multifarious church activities, which seem to multiply as the institutional idea spreads, Christians should remember that the church is the product of a great spiritual experience, without which it would, as far as one can see, never have come into being. And also they should reflect on the fact that it is only through the Spirit outpoured on Whitsunday that they can "have a right judgment in all things." The unity was such as to transcend differences of speech, so that men of many languages understood one another, and each heard in his own tongue "the wonderful works of God."

Pentecost, we must believe, is prophetic of

a time when some such unity shall be restored, when at least there will be an end to the preaching of the wretched gospel of religious prejudice and class and racial hatred. "They were all with one accord in one place"—so it was, and so it must continue to be if the church is to know anything of Pentecostal power, is to be a blessing to the world. It was a marvelously mixed assembly, that first Christian congregation. Yet it was one, and all were alike blessed. The moral is sufficiently obvious, and Whitsunday preaches its own sermon to all who will read the record with a humble desire to profit by it, and learn from it.

XXI

MEMORIAL DAY

MEMORIAL DAY is a day kept in honor and sacred to the memory of those to whom a call came, who by their lives and deaths testified and bore witness to their love of the Union, and their devotion to the great cause of liberty. Theirs it was to make a choice, to face an alternative, and to decide whom or what they would serve. They gave "the last full measure of devotion" that this nation might live. By their heroism and patriotism, by their sufferings, sacrifices and deaths, the American people are solemnly pledged to do their utmost to make and keep America worth all that it cost.

Memorial day is our national Pentecost, for it breathes the spirit of a dearly bought unity, which none to-day would desire to shatter, points to a mission of perpetual obligation and reminds us that there can be no noble living apart from service and sacrifice. It is, as is Pentecost, a day of idealism, a day for the

contemplation and exaltation of spiritual values. We can not do our duty by prating of "one hundred per cent. Americanism," much less by spreading the wretched gospel of religious, social and racial prejudice and hate. There was nothing of these in the great heart of Abraham Lincoln, and yet Lowell calls him "the first American."

Men of all races, religions and colors died that this nation might endure. We remember them all, as we should at all times, remember them with affection, gratitude and pride, and with, it is to be hoped, a prayer on our lips and in our hearts that we may be worthy of them. Only so can we make the day finely real, appreciate its deep significance and derive any inspiration from it and from the sermon it preaches with so tender an eloquence.

Of course the value of this day, and indeed of all such days, is to be found in the lesson they teach. Merely to "remember" the servants of mankind who died in the line of duty, merely to honor, as we say, the saints of God—this is nothing, if we stop there. One can not think of them as greatly interested in anything that we say of them—indeed, they would be rather disposed to resent eulogy. In truth, the only way

fittingly to remember and honor them is by imitating them—following in their steps. Unless we "highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth," we should do far better to wipe Memorial Day from our national calendar and consign to oblivion the names of those who died for their country, and for us. One of our poets has written of those:

> Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
> Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed!

There have always been and perhaps always will be many such people, many among those who call themselves patriots and make a great show of what they are pleased to call their patriotism. It is not necessary to think of such patriotism as, to quote Doctor Johnson, "the last refuge of a scoundrel," but surely it is a poor thing, having no relation whatever to a genuine love of country and bearing no resemblance to it. There could hardly be a sterner or more effective protest against it than Memorial Day when properly observed and utilized. It is a call to self-sacrificing service to a country for which brave men

died, a service which shall be real and no mere pretense. The day is thus a challenge to the best there is in American life and in the character of the American people.

There is such a thing as the leadership of dead men, of men who have been dead for centuries. Often the only leaders of nations—at any rate the best leaders—have been men who had long ago passed from earthly view. As influences for good Washington and Lincoln are perhaps more truly alive than they were when in the flesh. It is possible to think of this people and nation as but an extension of their personalities. That was wise counsel of the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus: "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through His great power from the beginning. Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies; leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions. . . . Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth evermore. The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will show forth their praise."

While it can not be said that the boy who died at Shiloh or Gettysburg is "famous," his sacrifice assuredly is, and through that sacrifice his "name liveth evermore." Unhappy are the people who have no great past with which they can commune and from which they can draw strength and inspiration. The strength should be used for the nation's good, and the inspiration should prompt to action as unselfish as that of those from whom the inspiration comes. Something of this our great and illustrious past should mean to us who are so powerfully tempted to live wholly in the present. "Let us now praise famous men," and loyally tread the path which they trod. Just in proportion as we do this will this nation fulfil its true destiny.

While the men of 'sixty-one saved the country from disruption and dishonor, it is well to remember that the task of saving the country is a continuous and never-ending one. Salvation in this sense is not a state, but a process. The only assurance that it will go on must be looked for in the character of the citizenship. Even the most superficial acquaintance with history will convince one that this is so. If men and women are selfish, self-seeking, materialistic, lawless, lacking in integrity, and without a fine

sense of honor, the nation of which they are citizens will share their weaknesses, and may be ruined by them—as many nations, many great empires have been. To be sure, there are professional "country-savers," as there are descendants of those people spoken of by the Psalmist who "were afraid where no fear was," and from these little is to be expected in the way of helpful service.

Nevertheless all is not well with the country—on the contrary, much is wrong with it. Specifications are not necessary, since the evils are well-known and palpable. Most of them are due to a spiritual breakdown in the life of the people. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"—by such counsel as this we seem in this our day to set little store. "He saved others; Himself He can not save"—the taunt has come down to us across the centuries. It was answered by a great English preacher with another question: "How could He," and save others?

Christians have often read, or heard read, these words: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." To many, it is to be feared, the words seem paradoxical, if not mu-

tually contradictory. Yet gain through loss is one of the fundamental laws of the spiritual world—the very loss itself may be as it often has been, gain, gain of all that a true man most prizes.

It is one of the commonest facts of life that others are saved, and can only be saved through the death of the saver. The taunt "He saved others; Himself He can not save," could be leveled at every soldier of the republic on the battle-fields of the Civil War or in the mud and slime of the Argonne. For He saved, or helped to save others—but He did not save Himself. "A nation saved, a race delivered," sings Lowell—but at what a price! All of which leads up to the suggestion that those who would to-day save the nation, must not expect to save themselves, or to win honor, or place, or power, or wealth by their work. That is a point of view—and it was the point of view of the American soldier—that needs to be enforced, and emphasized in every way possible. We have lost it, or at least are in grave danger of losing it.

The gospel of success is proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of the land as the only one for sensible men—yet "whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." If that is

not practical, then Christianity is not practical. Viewed as many to-day view life, there could have been no more wildly unpractical men than those whose memories we honor. They saved their lives by losing them, and saved others by refusing to save themselves.

Yet with this record before us we are saying that the only business of America is to grow great, strong and prosperous, sufficient unto herself, and the only business of Americans is to make as much money as they can that it may be spent on luxuries and in soft living, to have what they call a good time, while others revolt against the very idea of duty, and devote themselves to a preaching and living of the selfish gospel of self-realization. It was not thus that the country was saved in 1861, and it is not thus that it ever can be saved, and kept safe. A new spirit there must be in the people if things are to go well with the nation.

Memorial Day should, therefore, as was said in the beginning, be regarded as a religious day, as in very truth our national Pentecost bringing with it a baptism in a new spirit, and an outpouring of the divine power which saves others by giving itself. It is a day of the sweetest and proudest memories which of themselves should

have a chastening effect and a cleansing and uplifting influence. It holds up before us all the vision of unity in an unbreakable brotherhood in which all Americans, of whatever race, creed or color, have equal rights—a "unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."

Unless Memorial Day is kept in this spirit, unless it means to us unity, peace, righteousness, and a love of country manifesting itself in service and sacrifice, it had better not be kept at all. For there can scarcely be a worse sin—indeed it is a sort of blasphemy—to make a mockery of a sacred institution such as Memorial Day is. The subject is one that invites to meditation, and the severest self-examination—and to repentance for "whatever is amiss in the temper and disposition of our souls." We need a patriotism of peace that shall at least suggest the patriotism of those who died that we might enjoy the blessings that are to-day ours, a patriotism that will make it forever impossible to sacrifice "the safety, honor and welfare" of the nation to selfish personal ends. Through loyalty to a great past, and only so, can the safety of this land be made to rest on a sure foundation. The road to disaster, on the other hand, lies straight through

disloyalty to that past, and its ideals. Of this land we may say with Longfellow:

Our hearts, our hopes are all with thee—
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee—are all with thee!

XXII

CLASSICAL VIRTUES AND FOURTH OF JULY

In an address before the Classical Association, Stanley Baldwin, British Prime Minister, said: "To me the outstanding and peculiar strength of the Roman character lies in the words *pietas* and *gravitas*. These were the foundations of a patriotism which alone could carry the burden of empire; a patriotism innate, a motive force of incalculable power, yet something at its best so holy that it was never paraded, sought no reward, was taken for granted, and had no word to express it. The highest gifts devoted to public service were expected; to dedicate and employ them in the service of the republic was merely your duty. . . . In what country in the ancient world but Rome would a Fabricius have refused all rewards, or a Cincinnatus have returned to his farm? A character founded on *pietas* and *gravitas* had its roots in truth."

These wise and most true words furnish an admirable text on which to hang a few observations concerning patriotism, a fitting theme, indeed the only theme for the Fourth of July. *Pietas* means a good deal more than piety, and *gravitas* than gravity. The former word carries with it the significance of dutifulness—dutifulness toward the gods, and also toward parents, native country and benefactors. It means filial piety, gratitude and patriotism. Underlying it is the idea of duty and obligation. *Gravitas* is defined by such words as weight, consequence, importance, dignity, sublimity, authority, seriousness and sternness.

There are not many words more closely packed with meaning, or that stand for nobler virtues. Those virtues were in the ancient world distinctively Roman. There is no reason why they should not be so cultivated in this country as to make them distinctively American. It will be wholesome for us all, at such a time as this, to think seriously of these great words as they may be found to bear on our national life, and to apply them to present conditions and problems.

We may think then of *pietas* as unparaded patriotism, patriotism so holy that it can not be

paraded, that is taken for granted, that seeks no reward. Men do not brag and boast of their love for father, mother, wife or children, and there is no reason why they should be blatant in their expression of their love for their country. The patriotism of the old Roman was almost synonymous with dutifulness, and where there is dutifulness there is seriousness and even sternness, and so the other word, *gravitas,* comes into the equation. Lowell's great poem, the *Commemoration Ode,* is shot through and through with this thought, as thus:

Some day the soft Ideal that we wooed
Confronts us fiercely, foe-beset, pursued,
And cries reproachful: "Was it, then, my praise,
And not myself was loved? Prove now thy truth;
I claim of thee the promise of thy youth;
Give me thy life, or cower in empty phrase,
The victim of thy genius, not its mate."
Life may be given in many ways,
And loyalty to Truth be sealed
As bravely in the closet as the field,
So bountiful is Fate.

It is only when patriotism is recognized as another word for dutifulness that it has any value at all, can in any sense be esteemed a virtue, or as anything else than "the last refuge of a scoundrel." Whether Americans love their

country, or love its "praise," that is the question that Lowell asked at the Harvard commencement immediately following the Civil War, and it is a question that Americans should ever be asking of themselves. What is demanded is that love be shown and proved, and not merely talked or sung about, and it can not be proved and shown merely by standing up when the national anthem is played, or by waving the flag or by complying with the flag ritual. We can easily imagine our country asking, "Was it, then, my praise, and not myself was loved?" There is nothing of reality in a patriotism that is not also dutifulness—dutifulness and gratitude. And dutifulness means sacrifice.

Rome is often held up for the modern world as a warning, and a terrible warning she is in the later developments of her national life. There could be no more dramatic proof of the truth that wealth and power can not save, but may actually bring ruin on the society possessing them. This phase of Roman life can scarcely be too carefully studied by the American people. But we make a mistake in not going to Rome, as Mr. Baldwin did, also for inspiration, for "instruction in righteousness." Outside Christianity one can not think of a nobler school than Rome

at her best, the Rome of *pietas* and *gravitas*. Americans can not be too closely associated with the ideals of a country in which "the highest gifts devoted to public service were expected; to dedicate and employ them for the sake of the republic was merely your duty." It is a curious fact that precisely the same doctrine was on one occasion proclaimed by Christ: "Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." It was the Roman idea, too, that there was no reward due you when you did what "was merely your duty."

The prevalent American idea is far different, for we hold that there is nothing which a man can do for which he ought not to be rewarded—by wages, office, promotion, pension, bonus and the rest. We have even to a certain extent commercialized our patriotism and religion. Later the Romans did the same thing, and they paid a frightful price, and are to-day looked on by many as being all that a people should not be. They exchanged *pietas* and *gravitas* for wealth, power, luxury and imperial rule, and it was then

that they became a warning rather than an example and inspiration. The same bargain has been offered to many nations, and whenever it was entered into the consequences were fatal.

Americans on the Fourth of July are mostly given to thinking of their country historically in the light of the independence that was declared one hundred and fifty years ago, giving little consideration to it as a spiritual force, or to the duty of making it that. It might not be a bad idea to take independence for granted—as the Romans did patriotism—and ask ourselves what we have done with our independence, what use we have made of it.

On their birthdays, men, if they are at all serious, can scarcely help putting themselves through a more or less rigorous process of self-examination. Nations, which are merely aggregations of men, should test themselves in the same way. If America could speak with a voice of her own, it does not seem probable that she would give expression to an unclouded pride in herself—rather there would be at least a suspicion of a suggestion that all is not well with her as she to-day stands before the world. If there were pride, it would certainly be a pride tinctured with humility—perhaps repentance.

It is no time to be talking of our power, wealth, productive capacity, commerce and bank balances. There should rather be the question of whether we have any of the old *pietas* and *gravitas* which were once such important and easily discerned factors in our national life. The tendency seems to be away from these, and to be operating even in religion—as well as in literature and politics, and in the general life of the people. It is easy to fall into pessimism—and to some people nothing is pleasanter—but surely even to an optimist the facts are, or ought to be, somewhat disturbing. There are millions of people to whom the word dutifulness, which is *pietas,* is almost hateful, and who think of *gravitas* as synonymous with dullness, and who would substitute, and have substituted therefor, lightness and the frothiest frivolity.

We do not think of ourselves as owing everything to the country, as the Romans once did, but of the country as owing everything to us, as the Romans in their degenerate days came to feel. There actually seems to be an eagerness to surrender our independence—almost to thrust it from us—and become dependent on government, when it ought to be the other way round.

That is a very poor sort of Americanism, if

Americanism means what it is supposed to mean, what it ought to mean, and what it once meant. It is strangely—and ominously—suggestive of imperial Rome that governments in this land are giving "shows." One notes in our literature little *pietas* or *gravitas,* but rather a revolt against both, or, what is perhaps even worse, a failure to realize that there are any such qualities. Those who are, or try to be serious, are ridiculed as reactionaries and dullards, while those who adhere to and endeavor to uphold time-tried moral and spiritual standards, are lampooned. If it be said that all this is on the surface, one may admit it, but nevertheless the surface often gives an indication of what is going on beneath.

Ideals are losing their charm and power—are even being ridiculed, or set aside as impossible of realization. Even in religion one notes a painful lack of high seriousness, and a very earnest effort to effect a divorce between religion and intelligence, between knowledge and faith. It is easy to point out and see defects in certain institutions, in laws (or the lack of them), and in the actions of people. Lawlessness, for instance, is sufficiently obvious. But it is not adequately recognized that all these evils are traceable to a sort of spiritual breakdown—to a

lack, in other words, of the great Roman virtues of *pietas* and *gravitas*.

But the Fourth of July also speaks of faith, and faith is the voice of a sober but unconquerable optimism, not the optimism of the chauvinist or orator, but the optimism of reason and common sense. On the whole we have used our independence well, and in such a way as to influence human affairs beneficially. That is a reasonable, and, it is believed, a verifiable self-judgment. With the apostle we can "thank God and take courage." Our past, though there have been many mistakes and some sins, affords abundant ground for faith, and faith, if it be reasonable, is a great reinforcer. We surely can keep the feast with thankful hearts, and with gratitude for the wonderful blessings that have been showered on this land.

It was a great experiment, that of a hundred and fifty years ago, and it has succeeded beyond the fondest hopes of those who launched this nation on its career. Perhaps we are still in the experimental stage—in a sense we always shall be, since we are dealing with human affairs—and man himself is an experiment. There are many who think, not perhaps wholly without reason, that he has not yet vindicated the wisdom of his

Maker. It is cheering to be able to believe that *pietas* and *gravitas* can be cultivated and developed, and also to be able to feel that there are many who appreciate them at their full value, and are bent on acquiring them, and making them dominant in their own lives and in the life of the nation. If they are, as Mr. Baldwin said, rooted in truth, we must have them if truth is to flourish—if indeed it is not to die. The greatness of the task to the performance of which the American people are called, and the realization of its difficulty, ought to inspire them with a seriousness that is not now a marked trait in our national life.

XXIII

THE TRANSFIGURATION

THE experience through which Jesus Christ and three of His disciples, St. Peter, St. James and St. John, went on the Mount of Transfiguration was as amazing as it is unexplainable. That Jesus was transfigured, that He talked with Moses and Elias, that they themselves had seen the long-dead prophets, and had heard the voice of God speaking out of the cloud, the three disciples were convinced. Also they seem to have heard and understood the words of the two prophets, for it is written that "there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He would accomplish at Jerusalem."

In the midst of such wonders it is hard to believe that "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep," yet such is the record. They were also frightened when they awoke, for it is written: "Peter said unto Jesus, Master,

it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias; not knowing what he said"—it was so in this case, and has many times been so with many a Christian. Having seen their Master in His humiliation, they were blessed with a vision of Him in His glory, and heard the divine attestation of every claim that He had made for Himself.

Such was the experience through which these men believed they had passed. St. Peter referred to it long afterward, and appealed to the revelation as proof of the truth of his doctrine: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

There are, of course, rationalistic explanations, but with these the present discussion is not concerned. What is important is the effect of the events on the lives of those participating in

them. To come at once to the moral, two things stand out with luminous clearness, the need of human life and human experience to be transfigured, and the effect on both of transfiguration. It is said that when Christ was transfigured "the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering." Thinking of the effect first, it seems plain that the truly transfigured human nature must also be "white and glistering" under the touch of infinite purity. Surely whatever can have, or is capable of producing, such results, is one of the greatest needs of man, who, if he needs the effect, as he most certainly does, needs also the application of the force that alone can produce it.

For transfiguration, reformation is a poor and lame substitute. From the former issues a change in the inner nature, a remolding of the soul, while reformation, uninspired by such influences, may involve only a change in conduct or practise, a change which may have no element of permanence. The power of vision to inspire life, and to reinforce and strengthen all one's good purposes, can not be exaggerated. The problem is one of bringing spiritual realities to bear on human life, of establishing a vital relation between the two. Without such relation and

contact the soul is in danger of being smothered in materialism, and choked by what men call and think of as the "practical." There must somehow and in some way be an entering into "the excellent glory," for unless there is, life itself can hardly be glorious. It is the old doctrine of the new life, that life into which Nicodemus was told that he must be born. The every-day contact of the disciples with their Master was exalted into a contact with the divinity which was His, and from which He proceeded.

That is, it was contact with power, and power is another one of the effects of the Transfiguration—of any transfiguration. As the spirit is refreshed and cleansed, so it is strengthened, and may be made, as it was intended to be, dominant and controlling. If it is not dominant, the flesh will rule—"which must not be." These are the alternatives, and of them St. Paul has this to say: "Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Again he writes: "I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are

contrary the one to the other: so that ye can not do the things that ye would." After cataloguing the works of the flesh, the apostle continues "they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God," and concludes thus: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance."

The choice is between what the best in man would do (that is, his true nature), and that which prevents that true self from operating. "Ye can not do the things that ye would"—such is the fatal result. In reality the choice is between death and life—"if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." It is a real warfare that goes on within the soul of man, and it is only as the spirit is supreme that there can be victory for the right, and defeat for that influence which now, as always, prevents men from doing what they would. To conquer the flesh and its appetites is to live—to yield to them is to die. The issue is nothing else—or less—than that. Such is the message—or one of the messages—of the Transfiguration.

Whether freedom from disquietude is one of the fruits or results of the vision of the Transfiguration, or the condition under which alone

that vision is possible, does not much matter. It is enough that the two go together, and are intimately associated. "Mercifully grant," so the old prayer runs, "that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in His beauty." Inward peace is the portion of those who seek, and are blessed by the vision.

Disquietude must necessarily be the lot of those who anxiously strive for wealth or fame or prominence, for, in short, any of those things which the world offers—and prizes. That this is so must be apparent to any one who looks about him, and notes what is going on in society. As "debtors to the flesh" people are, in the very nature of things, strangers to quietude and peace. Just to the extent that a man is disquieted does he cease to be master of himself, and become the slave of things external to himself—and how many such folk there are in the world! The disquietude is the disquietude of a degrading bondage—a bondage of the higher to the lower.

Whitman speaks of "the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is, to the toss and pallor of years of money making, with all their scorching days and

icy nights, and all their stifling deceits and underhand dodgings, or infinitesimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve." "Such a great being as a man is"—the question is whether such a great being shall live greatly and finely, that is, live worthy of himself. Only as he does can he have the remotest hope of being "delivered from the disquietude of this world," and taste of the blessing of peace within his own soul. Transfiguration thus seems to be a change into the man's true self, and into a life lived far above "the howling senses' ebb and flow."

But this peace is far removed from mere repose, and is no guaranty of immunity from exposure to the woes and miseries of life, or from suffering therefrom. Descending from the Mount of Transfiguration, and again mingling in the painful life of mankind, Christ and His disciples were at once brought into contact with disorder, sorrow, suffering and despair. The sorely afflicted child was healed, and restored to his father. Nor did those who had been on the mount know anything of mere outward peace—on the contrary their lives were lives of suffering of the intensest sort.

But they were forever freed from "the disquietude of this world." And it was through this

very freedom that they were able to serve, and to undergo the most painful sacrifices. There is a selfish peace, or quietude, so called, that is won by neglect of duty, indifference to the needs of others, and a blinding of the eyes to all in life that is unpleasant or disturbing. It is the peace of treason, and is often the possession of people who know nothing of the true, the inward peace which nothing can destroy, and is enjoyed only by those who can rise above the world even while living in it and serving it.

Not ease, not even mere rest, but true peace, the peace which is itself power, is the endowment of the transfigured life. There is, it is to be feared, little enough of it. If that is so, it is because there are so few lives illumined by "the excellent glory." The life that is a prey to "the disquietude of this world" is the confused and disordered life. To set it right, and to dispel its chaos, there must be a bringing of it within the circle of the radiance of "the excellent glory"—in other words there must be some sort of transfiguration, however we may understand the word. This is perhaps what is meant by being "strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man."

Many people are, in this one particular at

least, like the evil spirit, inasmuch as they are all the while "seeking rest, and finding none." In the first place, mere rest is not what should be sought. In the second place, men seek in the wrong place—that is, outside of themselves, as did the evil spirit. That is a mistake that is repeated from age to age, and that, as far as one can see, is likely to continue to be repeated to the end of time. Arnold imagines the Orient speaking to the laboring Occident thus:

> "Poor world," she cried, "so deep accurst,
> That runs't from pole to pole
> To seek a draught to slake thy thirst—
> Go, seek it in thy soul!"

Yet, as the same poet reminds us, most of us "never know how with the soul it fares." We mostly seek peace, true peace, as we seek antiques, or old furniture, or wealth, seek it feverishly, and very far afield. It is possible to live spiritually in the air of the mountain top without ever physically climbing thereto. This hurrying age would be a great deal better for the practise of introspection, and even for a touch of mysticism. For life is a mystery, as is the spiritual nature of man, as is also man himself. He is more than a toiler and producer, for he has with-

in him, as Hamlet said in a different connection "that which passeth show."

Life at its highest is a relation between two mysteries—God and the soul of man. So the Transfiguration speaks with many voices and of many things—things of the highest import, of which it would be well for men to think with deep seriousness. There is sore need in our troubled and lawless days for lives that shall be "white and glistering," and bathed in the glory of the revelation of divine truth and beauty. An invasion of the human by the divine life—it all comes to that. It is thus that men must be "delivered from the disquietude of this world."

XXIV

MICHAELMAS

THE apocalyptic vision of war in Heaven, of sin and evil in what is supposed to be the abode of infinite purity, is one that it is beyond the power of the human mind to grasp. It is written: "There was war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in Heaven." It must be then either that evil can find its way into Heaven, or else that in Heaven there is the possibility and danger of deterioration. Men have for ages speculated—and still are doing so—concerning the origin of evil on the earth. Here we are told that the origin of evil was in Heaven, for the account continues: "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Earth's troubles, therefore, seem to be the fruits of the

victory of Michael the archangel. This suggests a more or less curious speculation as to the state of the earth before the advent of the deported angels—was it sinless? Did Heaven become sinless—for there evidently was a time when it was not—at the expense of the people of the earth? Tennyson writes:

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well, be grateful for the sounding watchword "Evolution" here.

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

There is no answer to the question asked by the poet except through revelation, and the answer thus given seems to be in the affirmative, that is, that there is, has been, or may be, evil "in every peopled sphere." The angelic nature is not in this particular different from human nature, for there were good and bad angels, as there are good and bad people. There seems to be the possibility of a vast extension of the domain of evil—a rather disheartening and disturbing thought.

That angels could and did sin, is made clear in the passage above quoted, and also by St.

Peter, who writes: "If God spared not the angels that sinned." Can, and do they sin now? In our familiar talk we speak of a man's good or bad angel—the language is metaphorical, but still significant. To bring it all at least partly within the sphere of human experience, the question presented is whether we are justified in looking for and expecting absolute and permanent perfection anywhere or at any time, or in eternity—perfection anywhere except in the divine Being? Browning seems to doubt it, for he assures us that "what's come to perfection perishes." Yet the poet had some queer ideas, and this may be one of them. Indeed, it hardly seems possible that a man perishes when he reaches—if he ever does—the divinely appointed goal of his strivings, which goal is perfection. That state would seem to be fulness of life, the life of God.

It is better to be content with the conviction—for such seems to be the teaching of Michaelmas—that good is constantly at war with, and conquering and extruding evil, and to think of the war against sin and evil as God's war in which man is permitted, nay, commanded to take part. No matter whence the evil comes, or where it is found—in Heaven or anywhere

else—it is to be fought and beaten. "There was war in Heaven"—there certainly is war on earth, a long-continued and very desperate war. Those who can not see that the good is winning are deficient, not only in faith, but in knowledge of human history. This battle is like that sung of by Byron, of which he said:

> —once begun,
> Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
> Though baffled oft, is ever won.

Perhaps it is necessary that it should be "ever won"—that is, won over and over again.

This picture of Heaven that we get in the Apocalypse is nothing more than a picture of life on this earth, writ large, and clothed in imagery. For the story is one of rebellion, and rebellion we have always with us—of rebellion and self-will. Jealousy, craving for power, ambition to rule, the bitterness that is felt when these aims are thwarted—all these we know as parts of human life, and as human life's poisoners. The chief business of man is to cast them out of his own soul, and, as far as he may be able, to banish them from society.

Wherever there is free will there is the danger of making wrong choices, so it is neces-

sary to remember that there is a wide difference between free will and self-will. St. Michael of the Bible story had free will—self-will, issuing in rebellion, was what ruined his enemies. It is so in the humblest and most prosaic spheres of earthly life. The free man is not he who chooses to run amuck with standards, and, as the saying is, to "live his own life," but rather he who freely chooses to "follow light, and do the right," knowing in his inmost soul that "man can half-control his doom," and realizing that "the highest human nature is divine." In Shakespeare's great play, the fallen Wolsey says to his successor:

I charge thee, fling away ambition;
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?
Love thyself last: cherish those hearts that hate thee;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
To silence envious tongues.

Only on such terms is peace possible—even in Heaven. So we have this apocalyptic warning against selfishness, ambition and self-will, deadly sins whether considered from the spiritual or social point of view. There never was a time in the history of the world when men did not

need to hear, and solemnly to take it to heart, and heed it.

Having had the vision of vindicated innocence in Heaven, we are directed by Christ to a vision of innocence and purity on the earth, as exhibited in the daily life of man. Thus: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven"—greater than the archangel Michael. Then follows this: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven." It seems a long fall from archangelic power and glory to the "little child," but in the judgment of Christ it was a rising. This is one of the many cases of a reversal of human estimates, standards and valuations.

The "greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven" is he who is most childlike. The call is to simplicity of life, innocence and purity—and the protest is

against sophistication, and the slyness—often passing for wisdom—that usually goes with it. One would like to know who was this "little child" that was "set in the midst of them," what his future life was, and what became of him. But it is enough to know that for a moment at least he stood as the type of Heaven's purity, and that those who became most like him were the "greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

It was a great English poet who said: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." He may be right, for he usually was. If so, there should be a prolongation of infancy in the spiritual, as there is in the material world. Thackeray says of Colonel Newcome: "He, whose heart was as that of a little child, had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of the Master."

"He stood in the presence of the Master"—that was the Kingdom of Heaven for one who had had the Kingdom of Heaven in his heart throughout his life, a life that is as real as if it had actually been lived, and not merely imagined. Thus it is that Heaven and earth merge into each other—thus that earth becomes Heaven. Those who catch this vision of the gospel—which is really more glorious than that of the Apocalypse—will never be hardened by experience,

no matter what the experience may be, as Colonel Newcome was not hardened, but seemed to become tenderer as he grew older. Rather they will retain something, perhaps much, of the illumination of inexperience, an illumination which is indeed a "kindly light."

Mysterious as is the record of war in Heaven, it is no more mysterious than are the words of Christ to those who most need, and are least disposed to heed them. In the two visions one may read the whole of human life, its strength and weakness, its trials and temptations, its triumphs and defeats, its glory and its shame. Everywhere evil is seen, but everywhere also is seen the conquest of evil, and evil disappearing. What struggles the "little child" had to go through we may not know, but we do know that struggle must be the portion of those who would humble themselves as the little child in the gospel story. For there are many foes to overcome, many stains to be washed away.

In other words, there is war on earth, and there was war in Heaven. But are men ever to know rest and peace, ever to know that they are at last safe, safe, and finally and completely victorious? It must be so—and yet even the angels were not safe, nor was Heaven free from war

and evil. It may be that one of the greatest of human virtues—vigilance—will always be needed, always find a sphere in which to operate. It is enough to know that there is a goal, and that men may win to it.

Michaelmas is one of the most beautiful festivals of the Christian years, and it seems to grow in loveliness with every recurrence of it, and that is true of the whole round of feasts and fasts. It speaks of purity, innocence, archangelic glory, childlikeness and victory, a victory which one must believe will be complete, decisive and final. Otherwise redemption would be a failure. The archangel and the little, unnamed and unknown child are the heroes of a day of which the Michaelmas daisy is the emblem—not only the emblem, but—or so it should be considered—a pledge of loyalty to the service of all that is good and true.

The day has many lessons, some—a very few—of which it has been attempted to set forth. If there was war in Heaven, there was also victory. As there is war on earth there will also be victory. That one must believe, and to that the long and painful history of the race points. The final thought must be of faith, and the courage that flows therefrom, both necessary to those who

would live fine, clean and true lives in the midst of a world in which sin and evil abound. But the faith that is required is a reasonable faith, and the courage is such as man should be ashamed to be without.

The Kingdom of Heaven on earth—that is the objective. And the great Christian prayer is a prayer for its coming. Finally, we are reminded of the glory of simplicity and naturalness, of earthly helplessness, of the familiar and what seems to be the commonplace. The poet prayed that he might see "naught common on thy earth." To look for and expect—and even demand—wonders and marvels when wonders and marvels are all about us, that is most human—and most foolish. There is as much of an apocalypse in the vision of the "little child" as in that of the archangel and the archangelic hosts.

XXV

ALL SAINTS' DAY

THOSE who are impatient with conditions that now exist, many of which are to be deplored, ought, without becoming resigned to them, to try to realize how long it has taken to develop any sense of fellowship among men, and to realize further that the work is even yet far from being completed. Just to the extent that the great task is uncompleted is the world un-Christian. Even what we call Christian civilization is itself un-Christian. But in spite of cruelty, unscrupulous and killing competition, degrading selfishness, war and all the rest, the world has progressed mightily in the thousands on thousands of years that man has been engaged in subduing the earth.

It seems foolish to say—so obvious is it—that civilization is an enormous advance over savagery. And civilization is, speaking broadly, more enlightened to-day than ever before in the history of the race. Glorifiers of past centuries

will not admit it, but it is believed to be true that there is more happiness in the world than ever before, and that more people share it. There are more virtue and goodness in spite of the many disturbing facts which to those who fail to take the long view seem to give the lie to the statement. More fellowship there is, too. Indeed, many forces are at work that tend to force fellowship on men who acknowledge no obligation to enter into such a relation. Some of these forces are commercial, some political, some social.

But, stronger and more important than compulsion, is the growing consciousness that men owe duties to one another as members of a social order which is itself a fellowship. They are realizing that relations that must necessarily be intimate, and associations that must be close, should also be cordial, friendly and mutually helpful.

When common sense and the high idealism of Christianity reach the same conclusion, though from different angles of approach, one may be very sure that the conclusion will be realized in the life of man. Twenty centuries ago Christ said: "All ye are brethren." The thought was that all men were brethren through a common divine fatherhood.

It has taken common sense a long time even to glimpse this ideal, but it is gradually approaching it. For there are few people who do not know that it pays for men to live together peaceably, and in—if not a brotherly—at least a friendly spirit of cooperation. Man has suffered most, not from wild beasts, not from nature, but from man. Yet there need be no such suffering—would be none if either Christianity or common sense prevailed throughout the world. "When he came to himself"—so it is said of the young man in the parable of the Prodigal Son. That was all that was necessary—self-realization. That is all that is necessary for the human race, which is, and ever has been, a vast and monstrous Prodigal. When it has gone wrong, as it so often has, it has traveled away from its own happiness and well-being, just as did the boy in the Bible story, so it really is a question of its coming to itself. There are signs that it is beginning to do so, signs which—strange as it may seem—are more clearly seen and unmistakable in other departments of life than the religious.

Many of the fellowships, it is true, have little of the spirit of true fellowship, but even when their object is largely gain and selfish advantage,

they still do afford proof that men can act together, and that they have discovered that it is more sensible—at least that—to cooperate than to wrangle and fight. Whatever the motive of the action the results are good, and they point to something much better.

Nations are learning the same lesson. There is indeed a real fellowship of nations that all hope will be perpetual—and perpetually effective. A great forward step has been taken. There is really no reason why nations, as well as neighbors in the smallest village, should not be friends, and work together constructively rather than against one another destructively—that is, work for happiness and prosperity rather than gaunt poverty and misery.

Here once more common sense and religion speak in the same voice. Indeed nations can not help cooperating and working together, for economic forces compel it. What is needed is that they shall do this freely, fully, consciously, and in a friendly and neighborly spirit. There is no good reason why either nations or individuals should get in one another's way, and thwart or attempt to thwart one another. Even from the material point of view, such a policy always results in great loss—loss ultimately for all—not

only of wealth and commerce, but of happiness, security, peace, good will among men, and the possibility of growth and development along intellectual, moral and spiritual lines. Men and nations all down the ages have resembled maniacs in their inability to combine and cooperate in furtherance of a common enterprise.

The world is, for the present at least, turning toward sanity and away from the old schism-breeding madness. With all its defects it is a better world than that which existed before the Great War, and it is in a most encouraging way showing capacity for further improvement. It will do no harm to indulge in a sober, and perhaps somewhat restrained optimism, not as an anodyne, but rather as a comfort to which our poor humanity is, in the midst of its trials and failures, entitled.

But outweighing all else is the religious obligation. There is a fellowship already, namely, the church, define it as we may choose. When people keep the great feast of All Saints it is to be hoped that they think of themselves as "knit together in one communion and fellowship," that is the church. This divine fellowship implies much more than mere cooperation—it implies communion, a far more intimate and

fundamental relation. The difference between association and communion is much the same as the difference between union and unity—the former may be mechanical, a mere agreement, but unity is by its very nature organic.

The communion of which All Saints' Day speaks is a communion of spirits. With that assured there can be no question of fellowship. "All ye are brethren," or spiritually of kin, organically related, such is the teaching. Unhappily the church presents but a faint picture of this "communion and fellowship," torn with dissension as it has been all down the ages—as it still is. But it does recognize the beauty of the ideal, and there are men and women in the church—in all churches—who are to-day striving to make that ideal real in their own lives and in the life of the world. In such as these must repose the hope of mankind, the hope of the church. Not all church members are "the light of the world," but some are, and all may be and were meant to be.

Nevertheless, this divine fellowship, this divine communion are realities, and they are exerting an influence in the world and on human life that is of inestimable value. Here is a far greater impulse toward real, organic and abiding

unity than can be found in common sense, or in commercial motives. For this impulse is of divine origin, and it takes hold of the deepest parts of the nature of man.

Men and women who are "knit together in one communion and fellowship" are under obligation to follow God's "blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living." Here is the proof and the only proof that they are full participants in the communion and fellowship. Blessings always entail obligations, and so it is here. If, as Christ said, men are brethren, it is their duty to live—and live together—as brethren. If they have known anything of this communion they must show that they have by "virtuous and godly living." Such living itself makes for unity, for virtue and godliness are cohesive forces and influences.

Wickedness and sin, on the other hand, bring dissension and disunity in their train. The divine call is to high things and noble effort and striving. It is a great comfort, and most heartening and inspiring, to realize that many have heard and obeyed the call, and shared in the effort and striving. There can be, indeed there is, a sort of touching of elbows in the great struggle for right and truth and purity. To the furthering of these the "one communion and fel-

lowship" is solemnly pledged—to make them dominant among men is the very reason for its being. Loyalty to the "one communion and fellowship" and to its objects and ideals is required and demanded of every one who is enrolled therein. There can be no loyalty apart from a recognition of the universal brotherhood, a brotherhood as between nations as well as individuals—for nations are only aggregations of those whom Christ declared to be brethren. For a Christian there can be no escape from this obligation, no escape from the duty of being true to it. Here is the true greatness of Christianity, its true grandeur and glory. Yet Christians are fighting over—evolution!

It has been said that men are brethren through a common divine fatherhood. So, too, communion has both its Godward and manward side. It is through their communion with God that men are able to enter into communion with one another, through fellowship with Him that they can have fellowship with one another. It may be, at any rate one may hope so, something of this spirit that is moving and swaying the hearts of men at the present time. It is the duty and privilege of the church to make men see what is the true and divine basis for permanent unity and peace, the unshakable foundation for

communion and fellowship. The foundation was laid twenty centuries ago, and it still stands firm. The part of man is to build on it, for only so can he build solidly and permanently.

If we could only have a real communion and fellowship in the churches the rest would follow. Never was there a clearer call to Christians of all names, never was there a greater opportunity for service, and on a world-wide scale. If they indeed have communion and fellowship with God they can not help having communion and fellowship with one another. Without the latter there can be nothing of the former.

"By their fruits ye shall know them"—the old test still stands. If there is no fruit there is obviously no life, and if there is evil fruit there is of necessity an evil life. It may be that too much attention is paid to social service, and not enough to spiritual renewal and regeneration, which may be the highest and perhaps the most needed form of social service. If there is real communion and fellowship between man and God, and among men, there will not be one obligation left unperformed, one duty left undone. There is not one form of social service that is not at bottom a problem of divine and human relations, and of maintaining and strengthening them.

XXVI

THANKSGIVING DAY

THE fixing a day for the giving of thanks seems to raise the question as to whether one can be thankful to order. Yet if it were not for times and seasons it does not seem probable that man would have given any attention whatever to the spiritual side of his nature. Worship is a duty at all times, and yet we have our Sunday as a special day of worship, and it has been found to be of great value, if not indispensable. It is so with the Christian year, with its round of feasts and fasts. Than this there is no more effective guardian of the faith, no more potent spiritual influence.

So we have our Thanksgiving Day, which perhaps it would be well to consider as a feast of the Christian year, along with Christmas and Easter. It certainly is worth little to those who disregard or fail to appreciate its deeply religious significance. Men are not supposed to say: "Go to, let us be thankful on the last Thurs-

day in November," but rather: "Let us show in a special way and by a common worship on that day the thankfulness that we always feel." Thus it is that the day should be kept, not only in a spirit of thankfulness, but with a humble sense of dependence on God, such a dependence as shall destroy, for the time at any rate, that arrogant spirit of self-sufficiency which is so offensive to God and man, and so destructive of character.

Perhaps the note of humility in the observance of the day should be more marked than even that of gratitude. It is to a humble thankfulness that the nation is called. How can thankfulness to the Almighty be other than humble? If it is not that it is likely to be patronizing—as in truth it often has been. It was against this self-sufficiency that the author of the book Deuteronomy warned his people in the most impressive way, reminding them that they were absolutely dependent on God, and trying to make them realize that everything they had, and that all the blessings they enjoyed, had come from Him.

It seems rather foolish—and it is a foolishness of which men are often guilty—to raise the question of what we have to be thankful for, and to attempt to enumerate and catalogue our bless-

ings. Many sermons have been preached in which it was sought to prove that we should be thankful for this or that supposed good—which might not be a good after all. This is to miss the main point. For what we have to do with is a state of mind, an attitude of soul, and a spiritual relationship—that between the spirit of man, and God, who is a spirit, and who must be worshiped, if worshiped at all, "in spirit and in truth."

Thankfulness is a necessary and vital part of worship, and it is through worship, however we may define the word, that it finds expression. It was when men had "eaten and were full" that they were in danger of forgetting God, in danger of falling prey to the great vice of self-sufficiency. Thus it seems that what people, in their materialism, count the greatest blessings, may be the worst evils with which a human soul may be afflicted. This idea was expressed by Bacon in his well-known declaration that prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament and adversity of the New Testament. One may go further and say that prosperity may or may not be a blessing—it all depends on its effect on character. Whether a man is rich or poor does not matter if his state of mind and attitude of

soul are such as should mark the life of a child of God. Adversity may poison and embitter the soul as prosperity may corrupt and enfeeble it. In both cases the important thing is how they are borne.

It seems, therefore, that it is impossible to be sure what are and what are not blessings, considering the matter from the materialistic point of view. It is then futile to attempt to weigh what are supposed to be benefits against what are supposed to be losses, and to try to strike a balance between them.

Sir Henry Wotton was wise when he prayed God "more of His grace than gifts to send," for the favor of God, and the divine power in which men may share, are possessions which the good and great have ever coveted and often enjoyed. No one can be injured by the granting of a prayer for them. Goodness, unselfishness, integrity, moral and spiritual courage, cleanness of heart and life, purity of soul, the capacity of self-sacrifice, true humility—for these graces and virtues, and such as they, one who possesses them, or any of them, in even slight degree, can not be too thankful.

Indeed, the very possession of them, or, if not that, the craving for them, will make one

thankful. Such a man will never plead his own merits as deserving of a reward, for he will be slow to recognize those merits, and will be very likely to undervalue them. Certainly he will revolt from such a commercial view of his relationship with God. It is a contemptible idea, that of so much thankfulness for so much good. The next step would be to thank God for what we are, an attitude condemned twenty centuries ago in immortal words. The man rejected had many "gifts," but his heart was untenanted by divine grace, and his soul was sufficient unto itself. There is therefore reason to think that there is a real danger even in thankfulness if it is unaccompanied by humbleness of spirit, and a sense of personal unworthiness.

We do not thank God as we politely thank a friend for a courtesy or slight favor, which we may, perhaps rightly, feel was fairly due us. Thankfulness to the Almighty means a pouring out of the heart and soul in reverent gratitude for "inestimable benefits" to which we may not feel ourselves in any sense entitled, and which we are surely conscious of not having merited or earned. Something of this, Thanksgiving Day ought to mean to our people, who have in their national life so much of which to be ashamed.

All this thankfulness means, but it means still more. For it is not only an effect and result, but also a cause. In the soul thus dominated other virtues, graces and powers must take root, and blossom into vigorous life. One of them is obedience, which is the best possible proof that the thankfulness is genuine. Obedience, indeed, may be said to be thankfulness in action.

In an old form of family prayer this thought is beautifully expressed: "We bless Thee for Thy patience with us, notwithstanding our many and great provocations; for all the directions, assistances and comforts of Thy Holy Spirit, for Thy continual care and watchful providence over us through the whole course of our lives; and particularly for the mercies and benefits of the past day, beseeching Thee to continue these Thy blessings to us, and to give us grace to show our thankfulness in a sincere obedience to His laws, through whose merits and intercession we received them all, Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ."

We are to "show our thankfulness" by our "obedience." There can be no gratitude toward God in the hearts of those who rebel against Him, for such rebellion is a complete demonstration of ingratitude. With the rebellion must

necessarily go a pride that is as far as possible removed from that humbleness which is a characteristic of the thankful heart. But the obedience must not be grudging, or felt to be irksome. The Psalmist said: "A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful," and so it must be "a joyful and pleasant thing" to obey. Thus Thanksgiving Day, if it is kept in the right spirit, should mold and influence the whole course of one's life, and tend to bring it more and more into conformity with the divine will, and make it more and more cheerfully submissive to the divine law. In the same form from which the above quotation is taken men pray for "such a grateful sense of Thy goodness to us, as may make us both afraid and ashamed to offend Thee." Gratitude and obedience are again yoked together.

We are, as will be recognized, far outside the circle of materialities, as we should be in dealing with this great subject. For the theme is at bottom the relation between two spirits—God and man. While there is divine provision for the materialities, such as food and raiment, for which we are rightfully thankful, these are not of primary importance. It is written in the Old Testament and reaffirmed by Jesus Christ that

"man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In that great truth consists, very largely, man's greatness. So let us continue to take the materialities for granted, and dwell on the great truth that it is "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" that man can only truly live.

Here are some of the divine words: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

One of the results of thankfulness ought to be such a sense of vision as will enable one to see the beauty of such a life as that portrayed, and

such a stirring of conscience as will make one feel the weight of the obligation to try to realize the ideal in the practical business of living. For perfection is man's goal. That it will one day be attained one dare not deny or doubt.

So we approach each Thanksgiving Day in the hope that it may mean much more to this people than it sometimes has meant. Its great lesson, after all, is of the absolute dependence of man on God. And that is a lesson that it is most difficult for men to learn, as it always has been. The day is a rebuke to pride, for its central thought is of the helplessness of man apart from God. Whether it be pride of family, possessions, or talents, pride in virtue (which may be a mere mask), or that killing pride of a narrow and heated nationalism, it is the same sin, the same offense in the sight of God. Very rightly has pride been counted among the seven deadly sins. Perhaps there is only one sin that is worse—hypocrisy. And the two are close of kin. Only "by an humble, holy and obedient walking before God all our days" can true and reverent thankfulness be made manifest.

If Americans and America have been greatly blessed that fact only adds to the weight of their obligations and responsibilities, in accordance

with the old and divine law that of those to whom much has been given will much be required. It is the chivalrous doctrine of "noblesse oblige." To go against it is to bring shame and disgrace on one's self and on the nation, and to confess to a smallness and meanness of spirit and soul. The day teaches much—a good deal more than some of us sometimes realize. The thankful heart will, finally, be the serving and loving heart, the heart devoted to and laboring for peace and good will among men.

Thanksgiving Day is not a day for boasting or self-congratulation, but rather one for confession and self-examination. If we are to be truly thankful we must first of all be thankful for what really counts, for all that bears on, and may determine the eternal destiny of man. Only so can it be a real Thanksgiving Day, a day of true and abiding joy.

XXVII

GROWING OLD

It is an interesting moment in the life of a man when he for the first time realizes—often, if not as a rule, belatedly—that he can no longer think or speak of himself as "growing old," for the very simple reason that he is in truth already old, and that, having reached that state, growth toward it is obviously impossible. The shock is all the greater when he hears—as he is certain to—one of his schoolmates, a man the same age as himself, referred to as "Old Mr. X," or, less reverently, as "Old Man X." His first thought, to which indeed he may rashly give expression, is: "Why, he is no older than I," and his next one is that others are no doubt speaking of him as "Old Man Y."

The subject of these remarks observes that almost all those whose deaths are recorded in the papers are younger than he. And when people, even young women, insist on surrendering to him their seats in the street-cars, the case is closed, his

status is fixed. He begins to doubt the wisdom of Rabbi Ben Ezra, who thought that "the best is yet to be" and declared that there was a blessing in growing old. The amiable and worthy Doctor Holmes insisted that he was "seventy years young"—a pleasing conceit or fancy, of which no one would have robbed him who held and cherished it. But it was scarcely more than that. It would have been nearer the truth to say that he was—as he certainly was—a "young old man." In applying the words to himself no man, provided the words are accurately descriptive, is guilty of self-deception, or of the vain and foolish attempt to deceive others.

Certainly when one can talk lightly of things that happened fifty or sixty years ago, one can not be said to have drunk of the famous fountain so eagerly sought by our old schoolboy hero, Ponce de Leon. A graceful surrender is best—yet one can surrender with the honors of war and maintain one's youthful feelings, one's brave outlook on life. And that is no mean achievement.

Philosophers have frequently, and often with a gentle cynicism, commented on the fact that while no one wished to grow old, no one desired to die young—the only way to escape from being

old. What then could a wise and benevolent Providence do to satisfy or make happy a humanity that was, and is so unreasonable? That is a task that seems to be beyond the power even of omnipotence to perform. The only possible choice is between old age and an early death, a choice which, fortunately, it is not left to man to make, for, if it were, he would be sorely puzzled. We make too much of the span of years between the cradle and the grave, for at its longest it is short when measured against the eternity of either the past or the future.

The Psalmist wrote: "Behold, Thou has made my days as it were a span long; and mine age is even as nothing in respect of Thee; and verily every man living is altogether vanity." It is perhaps permitted to take a somewhat more cheerful view, but it certainly is true that man's life is only "a span long," and therefore it seems foolish to lament because the greater part of the span is behind one. When there is so little of life, it is not rational to complain because one has more or less of it than another. It is, of course, natural—and in no way blameworthy—to shrink from the weakness and infirmity of old age, and to be somewhat saddened by the thought of waning powers, and by the fear that one may

survive one's usefulness and become a burden on others. Viewed in this way, there is little comfort or cheer to be derived from Browning's optimism, from his glorification of old age. Here Tennyson is more helpful:

> Though much is taken, much abides; and though
> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are—
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.

Perhaps there are still some sufficiently familiar with the Bible to recall the observation of the patriarch, Jacob. When asked by Pharaoh, when they faced each other, "How old art thou?" Jacob answered: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." One hundred and thirty years he had lived, and yet he counted his years "few." He lived seventeen years longer, and, doubtless, when he came to die still thought his years "few," for the added seventeen years could have made little difference in his calculations.

It was a strange admission—that his days had been "evil," for he had been blessed by Jehovah. Evil there had been in his life, as well as much suffering, but also there had been good. Though he died in exile, he died in peace, surrounded by his sons. Here then is a picture of one old man's attitude toward the long life that had been his. But when finally he came to die, he, after blessing Joseph, said: "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." So though his years were less than those of his progenitors, his blessings had been far greater.

There are few men who, when called on to take leave of it, can not recall much good in life, and many things to be devoutly and humbly thankful for. To this day the God of the Hebrews is known as "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Great builders they were and to them the world owes much. But the point now is that though the patriarch must have known that he was old, he spoke of his many years as "few"—that is the way that most men feel.

There is a philosophy that is perhaps too simple to satisfy "them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight," a philosophy that may be thus formulated: What can not be helped does not matter. In this indifferent category old age clearly belongs. We are not called on to say whether it is bad or good. As there is no need to sing praises to it, or to pretend that we should rather be old than young, we can yet, if we will, find many compensations, and that too without being dishonest with ourselves, without laying ourselves open to the charge of trying to make the worse appear the better part. Nor is it quite a question of making "a virtue of necessity."

There are many such proverbs, such, for instance, as "what can't be cured must be endured," but they do not seem to fit this case. For there is here no question of curing, or even of enduring, but rather one of living, whether old or young, up to the best and finest of one's ideals. Considered thus, there is a great deal of truth in the Browning poem, which assuredly is not all "bluff." In two of the stanzas we have a question—a very grim one—and a very noble answer. Here is the question:

What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull things, in order grim
Grow out in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

And here is the answer:

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou
with earth's wheel?

"Look not thou down but up"—that is the prescription. Continually to aspire—that is man's duty, and also his safety. If old people do not do this, the fault is theirs, as is the blame for failure.

There never comes a time in the life of a man when he can not aspire—aspire to something better than he has ever known, to something far better than he has ever been. Life should be, and may be a continuous rising, and that is one of the most fruitful ways in which to think of the resurrection. As the ties with things of the earth, even earthly affections, are one by one snapped and broken, those with heavenly things and the life immortal ought to be strengthened.

As the present fades into the past, and seems to be swallowed up in it, the future ought to become more radiant. And a future there always is.

As the old man nears the goal he ought to be more than ever determined to reach it, and more interested in reaching it, for that goal is not death, but a fuller life. If it be said that there is no proof of all this, as strictly speaking there is not, it is still to be said that millions of men and women have at least found in it something toward which to aspire, and the aspiration at least was a fact, as it still is.

St. Paul was not concerned about that part of his life which lay behind him, or that part which he was at the time living. He knew that he was soon to "depart," but he still looked up, looked to the future. The "mark" was ahead of him, and he strained toward it as the runner in the Olympic games. There was future enough for him in which to win the only prize that he coveted—"the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And just before his death at the hands of the headsman, he said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day;

and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Youth and age have one possession in common, a possession that includes all else, and that is life. Also they have one duty in common, and that is to live that shared life as in the "great Taskmaster's eye." Whether there is much or little of it on this earth is, as has been said, a matter of not the slightest importance. It is quality, and not duration that counts. The parable of the vineyard is a wonderful picture of man's career. Those who had only one hour in which to labor were made equal to those who had toiled all day, or rather they were equal in the very nature of things, considered spiritually.

There are those who hold that time has no real existence. Whatever time is, or is not, there is always enough of it for the things that really ought to be done, for the things that it is shameful to leave undone. Age ought to be wiser, kinder, gentler and more tolerant and charitable than youth. If it is not, it can only be because life has been misspent. It is, of course, true that men respond, or react, to use the fashionable word, differently to the pressure, stress and trials of life. But as the struggle draws to a close it should leave as one of its fruits a finer

and stronger character, a serenity of soul, and a faith all the firmer for being based on experience. Whether the old man can accept the doctrine that "the best is yet to be," he surely can make these words his own:

Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned.
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

To see all, and to have seen all, and yet not to be afraid, that, it may be, is what it all comes to. The "whole" that was "planned" was life; and of life, old age is simply a part. The sunset is far lovelier than "the garish day," even though it provoke, as it sometimes does, a pleasant melancholy in the soul of the beholder. It is a pledge of peace and quiet, of which youth, in the midst of its "fitful fever," can know nothing.

THE END

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